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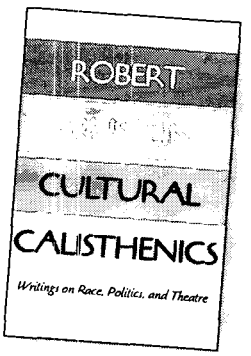

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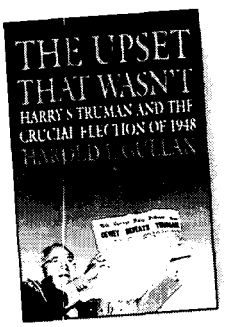

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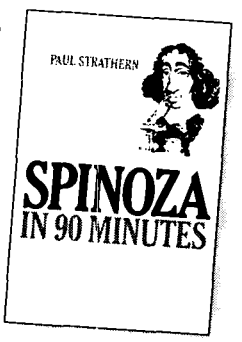

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Editor's Page

THIS ISSUE marks forty-five years of *Dissent*. It is easy to imagine that our founders would have been a bit surprised if told back in 1954 that this magazine would still be a vigorous venture at the century's close. After all, they started with just enough money for a year's publication, and small, independent journals rarely have abundant staying power. Moreover, they were well aware that their politics represented a minority position in mainstream intellectual life, as in the broader left. They would be gratified, much so, that their radical democratic values still resonate. Surely they would have been cheered if reproaches to inequality and conformism were less relevant. Undoubtedly, they would be disheartened by the state of American democracy. *Dissent*'s founders understood a great deal about sectarian fanaticism, left and right. The same can hardly be said of the current Republican leadership. It seems to hate a president more than it cares for the country's political health. McCarthyism's malodor was still present when *Dissent* was founded; today's Republican majority has manufactured its own stink. ■ *Dissent*'s anniversary coincides with another marker. It is a decade since the communist breakdown began. Our founders would undoubtedly be content that their old nemesis on the left, Stalinism and its progeny, self-destructed. "Was its bankruptcy, its pillage of every precept the left should espouse so difficult to see?," they might query. The lesson seems so obvious: if your end dictates appalling brutality (not to mention mass murder), then either you give it up or change it into something else—something that does not exact such means. No elaborate exegesis needed here, just old-fashioned humanism, just some democratic values. ■ On the other hand, *Dissent*'s founders would also shake knowing if sorrowful heads at those folks—still at it, are they?—for whom anticommunism is intellectual Viagra. ■ *Dissent* continues to speak from the left unabashedly. We don't offer formulaic answers. This is not because we lack an all-encompassing response to issues like globalization (in fact we don't have one). It's because formulas have substituted for left-wing ideas a little too often. Better to leave the formulas at a left-luggage repository for those who cleave to the unity of theory and patience. But best be in no rush to replace them with postmodern (tenured) torment. Or, in a different vein, with a muddled "Third Way" that would demobilize everyone—except capital, that is. ■ *Dissent* won't follow the herd of autonomous liberals that claims that distinguishing "left" from "right" is now meaningless. Instead, we'll continue to provide a pluralistic forum for left voices, concerns, and questions—reflective voices on behalf of a liberal but equality-friendly America; stubborn concern for social suffering and for racial and gender discrimination; complex questions about how to fashion a deeply democratic society, as much in social and economic structures as in political life.

M.C.

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Whose Agenda, What Agenda?

Harold Meyerson

THE REVOLUTION is over. While November's election may have been a knock in the head to the Republican Party generally, it was a dagger through the heart of the Republican right. As moderate GOP governors swept to victory all across America, hard-right GOP governors and gubernatorial candidates—Alabama's Fob James, South Carolina's David Beasley, California's Dan Lungren—were going down in states long regarded as Republican strongholds. It was the congressional right that suffered the gravest defeats. Not only did it lose its national leader when Newt Gingrich was shoved from the speakership, but it then lost the brief and intense battle to elect his successor. Christopher Cox, the five-term Republican representative from Orange County who waged a two-day campaign for the post, was the darling of the party's economic right. A former Reagan White House lawyer who advised supply-side fanatic Arthur Laffer during his quixotic 1986 Senate campaign, Cox was endorsed by the *Wall Street Journal* for the speakership—on the very day that Louisiana's Bob Livingston, the wheeling-dealing chair of the House Appropriations Committee, was persauding his colleagues to make him speaker. Livingston is a traditional southern conservative—but he's not a movement conservative like Cox. During Clinton's first term, according to the indices compiled by *The Almanac of American Politics*, Livingston aligned himself with the liberal position on 22 percent of key votes, while Cox voted that way just 3 percent of the time.

When historians look back on the period of the Gingrich speakership, I suspect they will view these years as a period of self-destructive excess on the right, much as they view the late sixties and early seventies as a time of self-induced implosion on the left. Both the late-sixties left and the mid-nineties right began by espousing broadly popular causes—respectively, opposition to the Vietnam War and opposition to welfare—but a sense of maddened rectitude soon pushed them to the fringes of the political spectrum. Just as the sixties left in its Weatherman incarnation announced that its mission was to wage an insurrection against established society, the nineties right moved to smash the state by closing down the federal government, made private morality a public matter by the prominence it gave to the abortion issue and the Lewinsky affair, and otherwise made clear that it too was spoiling for a civil war that would purify America. On both the Weather left and the Gingrich right, intensity substituted for breadth of support, and each group's apostles came to dwell within a hall of mirrors that led them to believe their strength was far beyond what the numbers actually were.

NOW, IN the wake of November's electoral repudiation, Republicans are scurrying madly away from the politics of jihad that they've practiced for the past four years. Problem is, their respectable, mainstream-right agenda looks shaky as well. Tax cuts still rank high on any Republican congressional agenda, but they didn't rank all that high in any of the exit polls, which showed the electorate far more concerned about education and about equally concerned about Social Security and the economy. In fact, by ending welfare, Republicans may have inadvertently helped to rehabilitate government spending (it no longer subsidizes loafers, you see). The GOP's big winners this month weren't the anti-statist zealots of Congress, but Republican governors who had identified themselves with improving the public schools in their states.

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And yet, the right is not going gently into the moderate night. As I write, zealots are pressuring the party to continue the impeachment process, though it has clearly become a Frankenstein's monster that threatens to destroy the pols who gave it life. GOP presidential hopeful Steve Forbes, apparently reasoning that you can never be too right-wing for the GOP primary electorate, complains that the reason for the Republicans' November reversals was their reticence in going after Clinton. These are positions that are not simply out of step with the American public, but on another planet altogether.

With the Republicans' congressional majorities so narrow and their agendas so skimpy, party leadership is likely to shift toward the governors. It is the GOP's great good fortune that it is impossible to govern a state as its congressonal wing claims it would govern the nation. In particular, though Republican governors have been at the forefront of dismantling welfare, they have largely ignored the anti-statist zeal, the preference for private-school vouchers and the like, that characterizes their congressional comrades' views on education. Over the past four years, they have, in fact, been increasing state education budgets—and schoolroom accountability—as though they were a bunch of Democrats. Like President Clinton, they have governed from the center: culturally conservative, indifferent to the poor, but more than willing to increase spending on public programs that serve the middle class.

As for their Democratic counterparts—well, they have no Democratic counterparts. For November's election leaves the Democrats in control of precious few statehouses—seventeen, to be exact. They will control the governorships of all five Pacific Rim states, where state GOP voters tend to nominate candidates who are far to the right of what these culturally moderate-to-liberal (-to-libertarian) electorates are willing to support. But once past California, where the Democrats won by landslide proportions this year, there's not a single major state that will be under Democratic control. Louis Brandeis's notion of the states as "laboratories of democracy," where progressive policies could be road-tested for eventual national adoption, has never seemed more improbable.

California, America's megastate, is the one exception to the Republican rule. Come January, it will not only have a centrist Democratic governor, but a Democatic legislature with the most left leadership Sacramento has ever seen. The one notably progressive idea under discussion during the current interregnum is for a statewide "living wage." This is a proposal, adopted by Los Angeles and a number of other cities across the country, that mandates that city contractors pay their employees—usually, janitorial or fast-food workers on city property—either $7.50 an hour with medical benefits or $8.50 an hour without. In its maximum version, the proposal for a state living wage, however, would cover everyone—supplanting the minimum wage and creating an option for a vast increase in health coverage.

The economic and public-health case for such a proposal is quite compelling: California has become the American capital of low-wage service-sector jobs, which also means it has a disproportionate number of uninsured residents as well (the figure is about 7 percent higher than the national average), posing a constant threat to the solvency of the state's public-health systems. The political case for such a proposal is shakier, but not to the point that it's beyond consideration. Polling on the living wage, as well as on raising the minimum wage and extending health coverage, suggests that a living wage would be widely popular (and most especially among the growing number of Latino voters), but it would obviously engender intense business opposition.

Beyond California, though, the Democrats remain a D.C. party through and through. On Capitol Hill, life in the minority may have its consolations. A six-vote deficit in the House is probably easier to handle than a six-vote majority: in either case, the Democrats probably couldn't pass significant legislation, and this way, they won't be blamed for it. This way, the question of What To Do With Bill Clinton remains the GOP's headache, not theirs.

With the number of House Democrats slightly augmented as a result of November's vote, Clinton, Gephardt, Daschle and Co. will

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doubtless resurrect their near-misses of the past session. Legislation increasing federal funding for school construction, federal regulation of tobacco sales to minors, and patients' ability to sue their HMO will be reintroduced, and the new Republican leadership may feel compelled to strike a compromise on some of these proposals. The Republicans are more likely to hang tough, at least in the Senate, on the one Democratic proposal that would actually shake up the established order: campaign-finance reform.

The biggest question looming over Washington is the "reform" of Social Security, and the best-kept secret in this mystery is the position of the president. Bill Clinton has already conceded the right's argument that the current system is imperiled, though the projections of budget surpluses far into the future have rendered this threat more a matter of faith than of hard numbers. He has nodded attentively at presentations calling for the partial privatization of the system, though these presentations were delivered at forums that antedated the stock market's wild summer gyrations. For their part, some core Democratic groups, labor in particular, have intensified their opposition to privatization, arguing, quite rightly, that the current program is a hugely effective antipoverty program and a stabilizer for the entire economy.

BILL CLINTON has flouted core Democratic constituencies before, of course, most notably by endorsing the Republicans' decimation of welfare, but his indebtedness to those groups has increased during the course of the impeachment wars. Al Gore's reluctance to offend such groups approaches the infinite. Public opinion, having been barraged for years with propaganda from privatization advocates while the existing system's champions have been utterly mute, remains fluid. This is not 1994; the public is manifestly not in an anti-statist mood. Support for broadly targeted government programs that enhance economic opportunity and security—programs that improve teacher training, raise teachers' salaries, and hike the minimum wage—remains high. The challenge for Social Security advocates is not merely to assure the public that Social Security is not merely such a program, but one whose solvency can be assured without having to dismantle it altogether.

The broader question confronting the Democrats is whether their carefully crafted minimalism in all things economic isn't actually hurting them at the polls. As Ruy Teixeira of the Economic Policy Institute has pointed out, the Democrats have improved their vote during the four elections of the Clinton years chiefly among the most affluent electors. Support for Democratic House candidates among voters from households with annual incomes over $75,000 has risen from 44 percent in 1992, and 38 percent in 1994, to 47 percent in the November elections. Support for Democratic House candidates among voters from households with annual incomes under $30,000, however, has declined since 1992—from 69 percent to 59 percent among voters whose household-income level is beneath $15,000, from 57 percent to 55 percent among voters whose household income is between $15,000 and $30,000. In 1992, the Democrats stood for universal health insurance. Today, they are the party that wants to facilitate more HMO lawsuits. Their president, quite commendably, speaks of creating a more stable, mixed economy on the global level, even as his Treasury Department shoots down all proposals that could produce such reforms. If the Democrats are to regain their status as America's majority party, they will have to commit themselves more firmly to the causes of economic opportunity and security—causes that now require some changes in the rules of the global marketplace (more accurately, the creation of some rules for the global marketplace).

In 1998, the Democrats can justly boast that they have reclaimed the center on cultural questions. However, they have yet to formulate an economic agenda that will make a lasting difference in the lives of millions of Americans—and a lasting difference in the fortunes of the Democratic Party. ●

HAROLD MEYERSON is executive editor of *L.A. Weekly*.

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Peter Connolly

Bill Clinton and the Two Nations

THE CONGRESSIONAL election is now mercifully over and the daily barrage of negative ads a dimming memory. But it should be remembered that in a rational political system there would have been much to discuss this year. In the summer and autumn the Asian economic crisis almost became a world crisis. The causes and remedies of Asia's shocking drop in living standards, its continuing effects in countries such as Indonesia, and the threat it still poses to the rest of the world are critically important political topics. In its October adjournment frenzy Congress appropriated $18 billion to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help avert future economic collapses in countries deemed to be in difficulty. But virtually no candidate of either major party so much as mentioned the furious controversy over how best to deal with these rolling crises of world capitalism. On September 25, the *New York Times* reported that 43.4 million Americans still lack health insurance after six years of prosperity—and the number is increasing. Democratic candidates occasionally talked about a "patient's bill of rights" but ignored those without sufficient money to attain the status of "patients." Senate Republicans smothered the campaign-spending reform bill, which had passed the House as the consequence of a stunning and unexpected bipartisan rebellion against our system of legalized bribery in the form of campaign contributions. However, other than taking account of the drama of Senator Russ Feingold's re-election battle, made difficult by his refusal of PAC money, candidates and the press ignored the issue. There is now a spreading agricultural depression, alleviated by a bipartisan congressional retreat from strict free-market principles. Very interesting,except that it might have been happening on Mars for all the attention it got. Abroad, 1998 witnessed the Yugoslav army engaged in mass murder in the province of Kosovo, and the probable development of atomic and chemical weapons by North Korea and Iraq. These were issues weighty enough to warrant mention in a national political campaign. And politicians did give them occasional perfunctory notice. But the national media were governed on most days by "all Monica all the time" considerations. Thus none of those matters was given the attention it would have received if the media treated politics as if it were about things that mattered.

The main reason why politicians could and did ignore genocide in Kosovo this year, or Rwanda in 1994, or the grim continuing realities of race and class in this country, is that our media are happiest when they can cover politics like a sports event. The quadrennial presidential "horse race" is the classic instance of this tendency. The network analysts and other talking heads love arguing about winners and losers, media "buys," strategic successes and failures. Questions of principle, such as those involved in the debate over abortion rights, are immediately reduced to disputes over tactics and political effects. The media scorn ideas, preferring instead to focus on personality and campaign quality. Crucial to Bill Clinton's stunning ascent in national politics was his pitch-perfect understanding of this. Ideologically flexible, tactically adept, possessed of a burning desire to win and of a campaign staff capable of exploiting every weakness shown by adversaries, Clinton was a candidate perfectly attuned to the media's coverage biases. It is thus fitting that his struggle during most of 1998 to escape the fate of Richard Nixon was covered as his last campaign.

But the media missed what really underlies the conflict between the president and his adversaries, for that struggle is profoundly ideological, gendered, ethnic, racial, regional,

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religious and, above all, partisan in nature. It is, in short, ultimately about something serious. The pro- and anti-Clinton alignments almost perfectly replicate the fissures in the "political nation" that have been growing wider for the past twenty years. But these deep divisions shape the nation's politics almost free of analysis by journalists, with the honorable exception of a few eccentrics like Kevin Phillips.

IT IS AN authentic paradox that at a time when the national media are more numerous, influential, and pervasive than ever they are also essentially powerless to influence the political allegiances and attitudes of most Americans. All politically sentient Americans, whether they live in Boston or Boise or Birmingham, have access to the same television and cable networks, Internet magazines and other informational Web sites, and national print media. Yet attitudes among the half of the voting age population that troubles to vote in presidential elections and the 36 percent of the eligible electorate that made it to the polls in November have not been so intractably divided since the heyday of intense party allegiance in the thirties and forties.

To choose one example of many: on September 30, as the House Judiciary Committee prepared to vote on whether formally to commence an impeachment investigation, a vote later decided on strict party lines, the *Washington Post* reported that among the general public 52 percent of those polled felt "strongly" that the president should not be impeached and an additional 14 percent also believed that he shouldn't, albeit less strongly. However, among "likely voters," 56 percent of the Republicans believed strongly that the president should be impeached, while of the Democrats, 77 percent "felt strongly" that the president should not be impeached. This fundamental partisan division persisted throughout the campaign and shaped its outcome.

The media occasionally note that Democrats and Republicans see this matter and other political issues through different eyes. But they seldom mention that the parties are now largely made up of very different types of people, a fact corroborated by data from the last two elections. On November 10, 1996, the *New York Times* summarized election day exit poll data that revealed an electorate divided along racial, gender, ethnic, regional, religious, and class lines. For example, among all men, Dole won a plurality with 44 percent to Clinton's 43 percent and Perot's 10 percent. Women swung the election to Clinton, giving him a 54-38-7 advantage. White Protestants, however, cast 53 percent of their votes for Dole, and Michael Barone estimates that among evangelical white Protestants Dole beat Clinton by three to one. Jewish voters gave Clinton 78 percent of their votes and Catholics 53 percent. Hispanics, in reaction to Republican-backed anti-immigrant ballot initiatives in California, gave 72 percent of their votes to Clinton. Union households voted for Clinton by 59-30-9. Blacks were for the Democratic candidate by 84-12-4. Southern whites voted for Dole by 56-36-8, while "eastern" white voters gave Clinton a 51-37-10 edge. Clinton held 84 percent of Democrats, Dole 80 percent of Republicans. Voters with family incomes between $15,000 and $30,000 cast 53 percent of their votes for the Democratic candidate; voters with family incomes over $100,000 voted 54-38-6 for Dole, despite his sometime pose as an embittered populist.

There was real and upredictable internal division only among electorally volatile independent voters, among whom close elections are decided. The Clinton-Dole-Perot "independent" breakdown was 43-35-17, while among all voters the breakdown was 49-41-8. However, in the 1996 congressional vote, Republican candidates won 48.4 million votes and Democratic candidates won 48 million votes, which translated into the 228-206-1 edge the GOP held in the House until last November, when the Democrats picked up five additional seats.The Perot candidacy masked the basic fact that the 1996 electorate was evenly divided. Had he not been in the race, the presidential outcome would also have been agonizingly close. In political terms, we are now indeed two nations, whose composition can be read in the nation's congressional alignments. It is no accident that there are still no Republicans in the Massachusetts congressional delegation and no white Democrats in the Georgia House delegation. This is not to say there

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are not still some southern white liberals, black and Jewish conservatives, Massachusetts Irish Republicans, and even Mormon Democrats. But it is to say that there are too few people in those anomalous categories to matter much politically for the foreseeable future.

On November 9, 1998, the *Times* again summarized the invaluable exit poll data, this time for 1998 House races. The results were similarly revealing in their polarized clarity. Republicans (36 percent of all voters) voted for their own party's House candidates by 91 percent to 9 percent. Democrats (37 percent of voters) stayed with their party by 89 percent to 11 percent. White Protestants? 65 percent to 35 percent Republican. Catholics and Jews? 53 percent to 47 percent and 79 percent to 21 percent Democratic. Whites over sixty voted 60 percent to 40 percent Republican. Blacks the same age voted 91 percent to 9 percent Democratic. Again, the Republicans managed to hold the House because of their narrow edge (52 percent to 48 percent) among independents.

With a sharply divided electorate, voter turnout takes on a new and disproportionate significance. As the Republicans learned to their evident surprise this year, getting one's party members to the polls comes to matter as much or more than scattershot advertising, which may only serve to stir up the other party's core voters. The huge floating blocs of ticket-splitting centrists that gave Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan their landslide victories (while in the latter two cases electing at least one House of Congress of the opposite party) may now be gone.

It is precisely those partisan allegiances that have been replicated in the Congress and country in the impeachment debate. The militantly anti-Clinton twenty-one-member Republican majority on the House Judiciary Committee is (with one exception, recent addition Mary Bono) made up entirely of white Christian men, ten of whom are from the states of the Old Confederacy. It is also instructive that of the thirty-one Democrats in the full House who voted with the Republicans on opening the impeachment inquiry on October 8, fourteen were southern whites, almost half of the thirty-two southern white Democrats left in the House. Of the sixteen Democrats on the Judiciary Committee, five are black, six are Jewish, and virtually all are liberals with safe seats. In such a mix, what the historian Joel Silbey has called (in the nineteenth-century context) the "partisan imperative" counts for much more than arguments over constitutional law. Committee Democrats did not support the president because they independently concluded that his tangled web of deceit did not constitute a "high crime" or "misdemeanor." They quoted George Mason and Alexander Hamilton on impeachment as much as was politically useful, but they stuck with the president because, for mutually reinforcing cultural and political reasons, they preferred him to his adversaries. They also came to the correct conclusion that it would be better for the party last November to fight the Republicans on impeachment rather than to surrender to them. As for the Republicans, they too were driven by the partisan imperative, sustained by a true moralistic hatred of the president on the part of their Christian conservative shock troops.

This fall, the Republican advance was unexpectedly halted, perhaps temporarily, by an appeal to Democratic Party allegiance and also to a lingering cultural nostalgia that partly underlies the refusal of many younger and middle-aged Democrats to condemn Bill Clinton too absolutely. It may also be the case that Democrats benefited from a strong turnout among pro-choice women horrified by the murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian and determined to vote against the enemies of legal abortion—such as Alphonse D'Amato. The Democrats managed to surprise their adversaries by arousing in their voters a sense of antagonism toward Republicans comparable to what is usually found only in the Republican conservative base.

The Democrats also benefited from a truly astonishing degree of solidarity among normally factious members of Congress. In the dark times of the Lewinsky war, Bill Clinton was spared the death of a thousand cuts that would have come from repeated calls for resignation or impeachment from congressional

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Democrats. Only two House Democrats—retiring Rep. Paul McHale of Pennsylvania and Gene Taylor of Mississippi, a Republican in all but name—called for resignation. This was immensely helpful to both Clinton and the Democratic party, which was able plausibly to brand the drive for impeachment a partisan effort. If, however, senior and respected Democrats had called for the president's resignation, they would probably have forced that outcome and gravely damaged their party last November and for the next few elections. Cautious congressional Democrats, even those with no love for Clinton, may have remembered the fate of Richard Nixon and the Republicans in 1974 and 1976. In 1974, it was of huge importance to the ultimate outcome that House Judiciary Committee Republicans such as Caldwell Butler, Larry Hogan, and Tom Railsback voted for one or more articles of impeachment against President Nixon. Their votes made impeachment thinkable. Nixon was ultimately forced from office by the collapse of support for him among Senate Republicans such as Howard Baker and Barry Goldwater. Was the GOP rewarded for those acts of courage? Hardly. It suffered crippling losses in the 1974 election largely because of abstentions among GOP voters and lost the presidency in 1976, four years after Nixon's forty-nine-state 1972 sweep.

Consciously or unconsciously, the Democrats imitated Republicans during the Iran - Contra wars of 1986-1992. During the 1987 hearings, and during subsequent court proceedings and years of controversy, Republicans generally stood by Presidents Reagan and Bush, and denounced Lawrence Walsh as Democrats now denounce Kenneth Starr. The upshot? While a few individuals (Oliver North, Elliott Abrams) were seriously inconvenienced by criminal prosecutions, neither president got impeached and the GOP sustained no serious political damage. So it was for the Democrats in 1998.

One factor other than political shrewdness may also have helped the Democrats to stay together during the past year. In the present Congress, all psychological pressures conduce toward party solidarity. In 1974, when Republicans sealed Nixon's fate, interparty comity to some extent still existed. Tip O'Neill and Robert Michel could have a drink or play a round of golf together. At present, if Minority Whip David Bonior and former Speaker Newt Gingrich are in the same room together it is wise to hide all sharp objects. In such an atmosphere even moralistic moderates like Joseph Lieberman thought long and hard before taking any action that would further empower the Republican leadership. In the immediate aftermath of the election it was generally believed that the Republicans lacked the stomach to go through with an impeachment resolution, and would settle for some kind of censure of the president. This may, however, underestimate once again the partisan imperative. If the House Judiciary Committee majority defies expediency and votes for one or more articles of impeachment, it will suddenly become extraordinarily difficult for other Republican members of Congress not to do the same thing and Democrats will also feel renewed pressure to state their positions once and for all about the constitutional dimensions, if any, of the evidence gathered by the independent counsel. At this writing, the battle is far from over.

If the Republicans do go forward with impeachment, one would also hope that finally the political struggle between (and to a lesser extent, within) the parties would be where the media focus would be, and not on rehashes of the Lewinsky-Tripp relationship and the other mad ephemera of the Monica and Bill story. However, the likelihood is we will once again hear much more about Lucianne Goldberg than Tom Daschle.

But there is perhaps one legitimate reason why the media have not thus far covered the Lewinsky affair as part of an ongoing conflict among politically antagonistic groups. It is that the larger conflict, while undoubtedly intensely real and invigorating to those engaged in it, is more a debate about cultural symbolism than substantive political choices. The contrast with past presidential impeachment controversies is striking. The failed 1868 attempt by House and Senate Republicans to impeach Andrew Johnson was part of the deadly 1856-1876 struggle between the Republican Party and the white South over the

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place of black Americans in the life of the nation, a struggle that had produced four years of actual war and a subsequent reshaping of the constitutional order. Radical Republicans such as Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner, and Frederick Douglass concluded that Johnson had to go because he had tried to obstruct every Reconstruction measure intended to help the newly freed slaves and protect the rights of southern Republicans, black and white. The ostensible grounds for impeachment, Johnson's alleged violation of a law forbidding the dismissal of congressional appointees, including military officers, was relatively unimportant, though hardly trivial when the South was under military occupation. But the attempted impeachment of Johnson was an integral part of the most serious internal struggle in which this country has ever been engaged. Similarly, the 1974 ouster of Richard Nixon might not have occurred if Nixon had not had a uniquely polarizing role in the momentous political struggles of the previous twenty-eight years. He had been in the thick of the political wars over the cold war, alleged communist subversion of the U.S. government, the Korean War, and finally Vietnam. He had called Sam Rayburn and Harry Truman "traitors," though ostensibly only to the "high principles of the Democratic Party." He had sent out his vice president to assault liberals in the same terms. For liberals, who detested him, the forced resignation of Nixon was a victory and a repudiation of everything he had stood for, and not just the Watergate break-in and cover-up.

AGAINST THAT background, how ultimately weightless current party conflict is. Both parties, though locked in mutual antagonism, actually pursue a politics of caution and temporary advantage. The Republicans, burned by their failed attempt to carry out their program in 1995-1996, pursue symbolic "social issue" votes and hold Clinton judicial appointees hostage, while leaving the basic structures of government intact and indulging fully in the joys of pork-barrel constituency politics. The Democrats decline to challenge the new laissez-faire orthodoxy except where their omnipresent pollsters tell them that the industry targeted by a given piece of reform legislation is unpopular (tobacco and HMOs for example). In a sense, the Lewinsky affair, with its inverse ratio of passion to content, has been well suited to this cultural and political moment.

However, the bad news for Democrats is that this moment may soon pass. The uneasy centrism which this Congress reflects and which the 1998 election has ratified does not emerge from consensus, but rather from stalemate—and stalemates sometimes end. There are angry Americans determined to bring this period of compromise to an end and take back what they consider to be their country. Thomas Edsall, in the *Washington Post*, reports the following expression of good fellowship from the convention of the Christian Coalition:

> Sen. John Ashcroft (R-Mo.)—who has already been endorsed [for president] by five prominent leaders of the religious right and has received financial support from coalition chairman Pat Robertson-launched a vigorous assault on President Clinton. . . .[T]heir [Great Society liberals] arrogant programs have failed, their corrupt values are bankrupt and their days are numbered. And, my friends, the sun is setting on the last son of the 60s, Bill Clinton," Ashcroft declared, bringing the cheering audience to their feet.

Since the premature candidacy of Pat Robertson in 1988, the Christian right has been engaged in a long march through one institution, the Republican Party. Until this year, their success had been astonishing. In state after state, traditional Republican elites have had to accommodate politicized evangelical Christians or face the loss of their positions. In 1998, the Christian right sought, unsuccessfully, to increase the Republican majorities in Congress, while providing special help to Republican candidates, such as defeated Senate candidate Rep. Linda Smith in Washington State, who were drawn from their ranks. They believe, however, that Republican setbacks in November were not due to voter rejection of their ideas but rather to betrayals of conservative principle by an accommodating Republican congressional leadership. Their current focus is the presidential campaign in 2000 in which they plan to

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be a dominant force in the GOP. They have not gotten the message that impeachment is passe, would deem Bill Clinton's forced exit from the the presidency to be their first great victory on the national stage, and will pursue it ardently. Their leaders, such as Senator Ashcroft and Majority Whip Tom DeLay, are determined men who seek no approval from what used to be called the respectable media, unlike their predecessors such as Dole, Bush, Reagan and Nixon, who worried about what the eastern press and national networks thought and said about them. A President Ashcroft backed by a Republican Congress with veto-proof majorities would attempt to undo the American political order shaped between 1932 and 1980, as no other Republican president has ever done. That outcome certainly seems less likely than it did several months ago, but a few narrow liberal victories do not alter the fact that the Christian right has become a formidable force, which will now make every effort to learn from its tactical mistakes. In 2000, the presidency, both houses of a closely divided Congress, and the power to shape reapportionment in the state legislatures, will be at stake. For activist conservatives determined to demonstrate that they are still a force to be reckoned with, the millennial year will be Armageddon. Mobilizing their adversaries and countering their appeal are still the most urgent political tasks liberals face.

LIBERALS SHOULD hardly be complacent in the wake of the 1998 election. An election in which they out-organize the right is unlikely to be replicated any time soon. And it should not be forgotten that many liberal bastions have been lost and not regained in this decade. Since 1992, the Democrats have lost 56 House seats, going from 267 to 211, and 12 Senate seats, going from 57 to 45. In 1992, there were 29 Democratic governors, including such formidable politicians as Mario Cuomo in New York and Robert Casey in Pennsylvania. As of January 1999, the Democrats will hold seventeen governorships, and there are no national figures among Democratic governors. In political terms, for Democrats 1998 was a stay of execution, not a real comeback. And the Democratic left remains marginalized and ignored.

What response to this challenge might be offered by an American left determined to matter in the political struggles of the future? We might remember that millions of rural Americans were won for the New Deal not by its cultural style but by rural electrification and agricultural price supports. Many of the great-grandchildren of those who marveled when the lights went on sixty years ago now need health insurance and cannot purchase it for an affordable price. The party that devises an intelligent, humane, and nonbureaucratic means of bringing it to them might win their allegiance too. There are also millions of affluent baby boomers who still vote Democratic today against their strictly economic interests because they became persuaded as young adults that the Democratic party, with all its faults, was still the party of civil rights and civil liberties, of environmental protection and a restrained foreign policy. The intelligent and affluent young attending elite colleges today might also be impressed by comparable moral seriousness.

In any case, we have no choice. UAW retirees and subscribers to *Dissent* and the *Nation* are not the most promising demographic cohorts upon which to build a political future. If liberals can't talk to people in the exurban "edge cities" now transforming American life about what will improve their lives, then we have and deserve no political future.

In the meantime, we may still have to argue that Bill Clinton should not be impeached, which will seem an infuriating distraction. But, as the Democrats learned in 1998, if we lose that argument we won't win the other ones either. ●

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Peter Edelman

Welfare and the "Third Way"

ROBERT KENNEDY was fond of this quote from Camus: "Perhaps we cannot make this a world in which children are no longer tortured. But at least we can reduce the number of children who are tortured."

In both the United States and Europe in the 1990s, we are told that the answer to such problems as the suffering of some of our children is a new politics that has been given the name of the Third Way. Championed by Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, it claims to be situated somewhere between old-style social democracy and neoliberalism.

The Third Way, we are told, involves the superiority of neither the government nor the corporate sector, but the partnership of both with a third force, civil society. The Third Way, we are told further, combines a belief in the dynamism of the free market with a commitment to social justice. A hallmark of that combination is said to be the end of entitlement politics, the end of people getting something for nothing, the end of the era in which rights exist without corresponding responsibilities.

Those are not the exact words I would use to express my views, but they are not inconsistent with the social policies that I support for children and other vulnerable groups. I believe in the market economy, combined with whatever regulation is necessary to control its excesses. I believe in social justice and in an important role for civic institutions. In fact, I believe very strongly in the importance of a civic commitment in every community to work to cut off poverty at its roots. And I believe in personal responsibility, although I believe also that the idea of "no rights without responsibility" ought to apply to everyone in society and not just the poor.

The problem is that, for many proponents of the Third Way in the United States, the words do not mean what I have just interpreted them to mean. The Third Way turns out to mean not a genuine three-way partnership and division of responsibility, but abdication of governmental responsibility to an amorphous group of people and institutions in the private sector. The social justice envisaged by Third Way proponents turns out to be a matter of the largesse of private actors. The personal responsibility that the Third Way calls for turns out to be the responsibility of the poor to behave themselves better, not a responsibility that extends across all the institutions of society. Corporations and wealthy individuals are still entitled to lobby the government for subsidies that seem startlingly like something for nothing, and nobody appears to have a responsibility to help the poor except the poor themselves. Third Way adherents in the United States might quote Camus approvingly, but their policy prescriptions seem more reminiscent of Anatole France's famous remark that the rich and poor have an equal right to sleep under a bridge.

America has never had a welfare state in the European sense. It has never offered a safety net that provides a baseline of income support, health coverage, and other assistance for everyone. America's safety net has always been a patchwork, providing benefits based on society's judgments about who is deserving and who is not. Even so, the radical right in the United States has been joined by a new constellation calling itself various names—the Third Way, the Democratic Leadership Council, the "blue dogs"—which has built a rather successful politics by attacking an American welfare state that never was.

This debate is hardly new. Conservatives have always attacked efforts to expand help for the poor and for the vulnerable by saying these were matters for which government had no responsibility. President Herbert Hoover said exactly that when the bonus marchers converged on Washington during the Great De-

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pression. He was personally sympathetic, he said. The Red Cross should do everything it could to help, he said. But not the government. The New Deal ended the acceptability of that kind of thinking. At least we thought so. In the prosperity of post–World War II America we thought it was just a matter of time before we would succeed in filling in the holes in our safety net. We would have national health insurance, seek full employment, and have truly comprehensive unemployment insurance for those who needed it. We would also have income support for everyone who needed it, especially children. Unfortunately, none of this came to pass.

We did make progress. The elderly, our most favored group, achieved national health insurance coverage in 1965, and their Social Security benefits were indexed to inflation in 1972. Once the poorest Americans, the elderly became less poor than the rest of America by 1982. The disabled received income protection in stages, together with legislative protection against discrimination in employment and accessibility to public accommodations. The working poor have come into vogue in recent years with a major expansion of a federal tax provision that adds to their income. The poor received an across-the-board income floor in the form of food stamps in the 1970s, and the welfare-poor and the disabled received health coverage in the 1960s, a program that in its total cost has become more expensive than any piece of the safety net except for Social Security. Low-income housing, assistance to the poor to help with the cost of heat and air-conditioning, extra educational help for poor children, grants for low-income people to go to college, and other programs fill out the picture.

The most controversial group over the past thirty years has been nondisabled people of working age, and especially those with children. Those without children were never eligible for federal benefits other than food stamps. Those with children—mainly unmarried women—had since 1935 been eligible for the program traditionally called welfare. It was never generous. Benefit levels were set by the states, and the federal government paid for a portion of the cost. In Mississippi the benefits have for years been 11 percent of the poverty line—with food stamps added in, 40 percent of the poverty line. The cost of the program to the federal government has always been well under 1 percent of the federal budget.

Before the 1960s, the states, especially in the South, generally gave welfare benefits to people they liked and not to people they didn't like. In the 1960s a combination of newly subsidized lawyers for the poor, Supreme Court decisions, and a militant movement of welfare recipients converted the program into the entitlement that federal law had always said it was but that everyone in authority had always ignored. A backlash began, with racial overtones. The program always helped African Americans disproportionately because the poor in America are disproportionately African American. But the myth developed that it was a majority-black program, and that welfare recipients were lazy and unwilling to work.

In fact, nobody liked welfare. Beneficiaries hated the way they were treated by the bureaucrats. Most of them would have preferred to work. The system didn't help people to become self-sufficient, there wasn't enough assistance to prevent people from having to go on welfare in the first place, and the benefits didn't get anybody out of poverty. And the right wing hated welfare for reasons I already have indicated.

Over the years there were bipartisan efforts to change the system. Richard Nixon actually proposed a guaranteed annual income. In the 1980s the states tried a number of experiments to make welfare more work oriented, and there was a modest federal reform in that direction in 1988. A genuinely good policy or a radically terrible policy would have required a massive change in the distribution of political power in Congress, and there was a deadlock in Congress—until the elections of 1994. Still, the radical conservative change represented by the 1996 so-called welfare reform would not have happened if America had not had a president who advocated a Third Way but engaged in a politics of personal political survival at any price. (Ironically, three of Clinton's most senior political advisers told him he would ben-

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efit politically by vetoing the legislation, but he was unwilling to chance even a relatively low political risk.)

Is the 1996 law really that bad? Haven't over five million people left the welfare rolls since the peak caseload of 14.3 million adults and children combined was reached in 1993, over three million since the law was signed in 1996?

It is that bad. The numbers are correct, but they are also misleading. Real welfare reform would make sure people receive the help they need to get and keep jobs, and would provide a safety net for children. This law literally removed any obligation for any state to assist anyone, and installed a lifetime limit of five years for federally financed assistance to a family, regardless of whether there is a recession. A few states have pursued good policies, and a number are pursuing policies that are extremely punitive. If, at first glance, the picture doesn't look too bad, that is mainly because this is a time of prosperity. Even so, only 60 percent of those leaving the rolls are getting jobs, at best. Most of the rest have been forced off the rolls by punitive policies that sanction them for failure to comply with work rules and for other misbehavior, such as failure to show up for an appointment at the welfare office. We literally don't know what has happened to them. None of this is publicized by politicians taking credit for a great reform. When the time limits hit or a recession comes or if both occur together, we will be beset by very serious problems. The Third Way has ended "rights without responsibilities" by presenting the poor with a slogan in place of assistance: "Find a job."

Despite all this, welfare reform also creates new opportunities if our civic institutions, especially at the community level, can mobilize in response. This means business, labor unions, philanthropies, religious institutions, universities, nonprofit organizations—in short, everyone. Federal policies remain vital, but by themselves they are insufficient. And an activated civil society must be animated by a politics of economics. Over half the American people have lost economic ground during the past twenty-five years, while the top 20 percent have done very well and the top 1 percent extraordinarily well. We need a politics that addresses this inequality, that talks about a living wage for all (not just the poor), that makes issues of the widely shared health coverage, child care, housing, and educational needs of so many millions of people. And while we must still struggle against discrimination of all kinds, we need also to pare down the rough edges of identity politics so as to accentuate the unaddressed common interests that taken together could build a new majority.

America has always had strong civic institutions in its communities. Whatever the rhetoric of the "Third Way," liberals and progressives have been struggling for a long time to find the right balance between government and the private sector, between national policy and local initiative and control. What we need now is still the right balance, not just a clever repackaging. ●

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Patricia Cayo Sexton

Con Games and Gamblers on Wall Street

TWO VAST worlds co-exist in the capitalist universe we now know: one, the world of finance (banking, insurance, and securities markets), and two, the corporate "real economy" that produces nonfinancial goods and services and provides the underlying "fundamentals" of the securities markets. Although both the whole and the separate parts deserve more scrutiny than they get—especially from a left whose view of society centers on economic concerns—the part that screams most shrilly for attention these days is the stock market, the main branch of the securities markets and a place whose identity grows even fuzzier as its jurisdiction moves further into banking. Of course, banking also needs probing by outsiders; but one thing at a time.

We are aware of the plus side of Wall Street as a place for some people to make a lot of money. But in our euphoria about riches, we have neglected a critical appraisal of the market's more negative functions as an enveloping social institution and as a shaky custodian of much of our nation's wealth. Having witnessed some ominous gyrations and plunges in the market recently, however, we may be eager to take a closer look. To this end I pass along these brief notes about its flaws and frailties. The flaws are many, and they affect the real economy, the global economy, and both investors and the general public.

• As for the real economy, an astonishing number of people assume that the market's chief, and very laudable, function is to supply the economy with capital through its sale of corporate stock, the proceeds of which are thought to sustain corporate growth and employment. The assumption, of course, is off course. The market's central function is in the resale or trading of stocks. None of the money changing hands in these resales goes to the corporation issuing the stock. The money goes only to the last owner of the stock (and to Wall Street agents handling the resale). Only a small part of the trillions of dollars flowing through the market each year enters the corporate real economy, in the form of new issues sold through the selective primary market. The huge bulk of the money goes into resales in the secondary market. The corporation gets no more resales than Ford Motor would get if I sold my aging Escort to a friend.

Resales, of course, facilitate the corporation's sales of new stock issues, making them more "liquid" and convertible to cash than hard-to-sell real estate investments, for instance. (I'm not sure I would have bought my Escort in the first place had I not known that it could be traded or resold.) Yet many analysts agree that the instantaneous electronic liquidity of stocks contributes heavily to the market's instability.

Another "plus" of the market is that if the corporation enjoys high and rising stock prices, it can also borrow capital more easily from outside sources. But corporations increasingly do their own financing. From 1945 to 1995, U.S. nonfinancial firms raised 75 percent of their financing internally, 12 percent from intermediaries such as banks, and 13 percent from the market. Firms in other developed nations raised even less from the market—Germany 3 percent and Japan 7 percent.

In sum, the market is far from being the real economy's sugar daddy. Instead, its function more nearly resembles that of the casino or a Ponzi scheme than that of a corporate helpmate; and "gambling" is more descriptive of what goes on in its chambers than "investing." As in the casino, luck is the reigning source of rewards. Every six months the *Wall Street Journal* treats us to a stock-picking con-

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test between darts thrown at stock tables and the picks of a top team of investment professionals. For the period ending May 29, 1998, the contest ended in a knockout victory for the darts; their stocks rose 28.5 percent while the professional picks were unchanged. For the period ending August 31, 1998, the professionals barely edged out the darts for a loss of 18.8 percent to a 20.4 percent loss for the darts: the Dow fell only 13.1 percent in that period, suggesting that the "experts" are gamblers just like the rest of us, and unlucky ones at that.

• Market operations are in at least one respect more like the Ponzi scheme than the casino. The casino can survive on its usual flow of money. Like the Ponzi pyramid, the Street needs more. It needs new money. It needs the Dow to climb, or at least stagger, ever upward as new money comes in to feed it, otherwise gamblers will retreat to places of better, safer returns, however many lectures they get about staying in for the long haul. Given this insatiable thirst, the market strives to sop up all available liquidity from the economy. In the political arena, it thirsts for the money going into government operations and insists (as Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin has done) that the national budget be balanced or in surplus. The less for government, the more for the market. It taps giant group-pension funds and initiates individualized ones (personal pensions) and it lusts after market access to the mother-lode of pension savings—Social Security.

Among the estimated $3 trillion or so of pension funds in the so-called securities markets are the felicitously named 401(k) plans, nonguaranteed pensions that depend on limited investment choices offered by employers and then chosen, usually willy-nilly, by employees—who presumably will thereby get into the swing of the market and put whatever they have into it. Typically employees are merely mystified by these options. A recent study of high tech firms reported, for instance, that more employees could name the eight states bordering Tennessee than could give the returns on their 401 (k) plans last year. Another study concluded that many employees have the "investing acumen of raccoons" and are likely to become "roadkill on the retirement highway." It also found in one large firm that the top quintile of employee investors would retire with 100 percent to 110 percent of preretirement pay, while the lowest quintile would retire with only 10 percent to 15 percent and that the lowest-return receivers were largely the lowest-income earners and those with the top returns largely the top earners.

At some future date—with endorsements from such notables as Senator Patrick Moynihan—federal Social Security, the major guaranteed source of income for retirees, may yet be tapped by the market, but the bipolar behavior of the market may foreclose such a disaster, as should lessons from Britain's failed experience with personal pensions under a Thatcher-market regime—and from free-market Chile under the guidance of its guru, Milton Friedman.

Of course, the market is not all downside. Lucky gamblers can make money in the market, so total abstention is neither avoidable nor effective, especially in a nation of betting addicts (more than $600 billion is spent annually on legal betting). Yet heavy risk always hovers over the market—for the gambler, the economy, and the whole society—the familiar reference being the market collapse of 1929 and the Great Depression and shattering world war that grew out of it. The dangers remain, and the captains of capital can hardly expect, given the dirty names they hurl at government, to get a public bailout of a market collapse as they did in 1987. Economists labor to quantify (and tame) market risk, but in the view of seasoned bettors like maverick currency speculator George Soros, risk runs wild in the market and can't be captured in a neat statistical formula.

• Does the real economy drive the market or is it the other way around? In some respects the market is the dominant leader, entrepreneur, and sometimes bully. Take the matter of corporate mergers and acquisitions, valued at $957 billion in 1997 alone, or 12 percent of the gross domestic product. Since mid-1994, 43,400 announced deals came to roughly $3.4 trillion. Wall Street arbitrageurs typically play a lead role in these mergers and acquisitions (M&As), buying heaps of the target firm's stock when they think a deal will go through,

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then seeing to it that the deal gets done and profiting on the price rise in stock they own. Arbitrageurs may also profit by arranging deals and selling to corporate CEOs who want to enlarge their domains and compensation. Although these deals do initially raise the merged firm's stock prices, researchers claim that the stock—and profits—soon return to what they would have been without the huge merger expenditure. In the meantime, millions of workers have been, and are still being, displaced from their jobs; and any useful endeavors the involved M&A executives might have otherwise carried on also go by the boards. Then there is the loss of competition among merged corporations to be considered, the cashing-out and closing-out of viable businesses (and their workers) by some acquiring firms—and the jailing of a few junk-bond dealers and inside traders handling these M&As.

THE STREET'S role in handling ownership shares in the real economy clearly can, and too often does, give it a leg up on those who merely manage companies, a fact that is at last dawning on some socially awake institutional investors. Among the signs of the Street's alpha status (and of its big-investor customers) is its success in pressuring corporate executives to lift their short-term profits—no matter what the cost to workers, communities, or consumers—in order also to lift company stock prices. The executives, often big owners of their own company stocks, are seldom reluctant to oblige, but some of them resist sacrificing long-term company self-investment goals for short-term profits and elevated stock prices. When they go for the short term, they follow a formula: sharp downsizing, reduced labor costs, union busting, outsourcing, and displacement of workers. Undeniably, many inept or sluggish CEOs need a strong push to make them shape up; on the other hand, many do not and should be let alone to pursue the best interests of the company. And all of them should be obliged to asses the human and community costs of "restructuring" before genuflecting to the Street's bottom line.

General Motors is a case in point. Acknowledged by all parties in the big 1998 UAW strike was the pressure put on GM by the Street and big stock investors to drastically downsize its operations—despite solid profits and prior steep downsizing (remember *Roger and Me*?)—and hold out in the event of a long strike, which GM did. All for the sake of stock prices. This is not to say that GM was a hard sell, but the scenario might have differed somewhat without the pressure.

• Two other Street matters to mention: market corruption and heightened market-made social inequality. The corruption that may be endemic to the market reminds us again of its kinship to the casino, which may be even cleaner because it is more heavily regulated. A recent book, *Street Smarts* (written by two business school profs), notes some of the Street's malpractices, as do the regular but hardly illuminating lists of diverse and innovative crimes and misdemeanors perpetrated by Wall Streeters—bad actors who invariably pay fines but are seldom prosecuted or required to plead guilt or innocence. The list ranges from the bottom to the very top drawer: note the recent conviction of Merrill Lynch, king of brokers, for market misdeeds. Asked why he robbed banks, Willie Sutton reportedly said, "Because that's where the money is." The same motive applies to the Street, though no investors or watchdogs seem aware of how big the take is.

As for inequalities, the frightening movement of national wealth and income to the top few is mainly the market's doing. As of September 1, 1998, there were $6 trillion in unrealized capital gains in the market, and in the 1990s trillions more were reportedly realized, cashed out. Who are the lucky recipients? According to economist Ed Wolff, between 1980 and 1997 the top 10 percent of the wealth class received an 86 percent share of total stock market gains. It's not the money alone that counts. It's the power, the money power to purchase elections, warp political democracy, and even drive down corporate-gains taxes.

• The market's impact on economies is global, not only as U.S. market events are felt around the world, but also in the special impact that one branch of the market—hedge funds and currency speculating—has on the

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economies of developing countries. The Asian debacle, ricocheting around the globe, is the nearest example of how speculators can benefit from the inability of weaker economies to defend their currencies. The financial chaos in the global free market apparently makes it impossible to track the sources of speculative trading, but despite the International Monetary Fund's and Robert Rubin's denial that speculation played a role in Asia (in the absence of hard data, how can they know more than the layperson?), the victim nations claim that the run on their currency was ignited by speculators who sold short (borrowed high and repaid low) both their nations' currencies and their stocks. As currencies plunged, foreign and domestic banks, investors and markets, tumbled over each other, unrestrained, to withdraw funds before local currencies hit bottom.

The downward spiral continued: short-term debts could not be paid with devalued money, imports could not be bought, needed loans could not be made, and stocks could not be traded and hence plunged. Yet the underlying fundamentals of most Asian economies were reportedly sound at the time, if slightly tipsy from the shifting weight of global business to China. It was the financial industry that wreaked havoc in Asia. And in July 1998, South Africa's currency collapsed, brought down by hedge-fund speculators meeting, reportedly, in the dealing rooms of London and New York. Both the economy and the politics of South Africa had been sound; now they were fractured. Then, of course, there was Russia. And behemoth Brazil? China slipped but did not fall. Its currency shunned the global market; it is nonconvertible, cannot be traded or attacked by speculators; nor can its grade-A stock be purchased by foreigners. Other nations are expected to follow suit.

George Soros, who brought down the British currency not so long ago, claims, in *The Alchemy of Finance,* that "it behooves the authorities to design a system that does not reward speculation." The authorities have failed, he says, when speculators profit, "but they don't like to admit failure, they would rather call for speculators to be hung from lamp posts than engage in a little soul-searching to see what they did wrong." Financial markets, he says, "are inherently unstable" as they now operate. Secretary Rubin, former head arbitrageur of Goldman Sachs, insists that the "system" Soros advocates would reduce market liquidity and is not in order.

Rubin does seem to think, however, that some kind of "order" should be brought to the global financial system (sans regulation, of course) and to what is clearly a wild, cyclonic ride of capital around the world. But what "order"? And when will we start talking about it? Meanwhile, we can only wait for the cyclone to hit the American economy.

Do we have premonitions of what might come? The giant Long-Term Capital Management hedge fund and its last-minute $3.6 billion rescue by the Federal Reserve, which thought its collapse might bring down the whole house of cards, give us a clue. What in the world have these colossal, mysterious, unregulated, and totally un-"transparent" hedge funds been up to? (Yes, Horatio, there is more in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in your philosophy.) One transparency that is available to us, however, is the simple folk wisdom that we should not leave the foxes to guard the henhouse, nor the free marketeers to determine the shape of the new order. •

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Jessie Allen

Feminists and the Sex Scandal

For the past year, feminists have taken a lot of heat for supporting President Clinton in Zippergate. What about that most basic of feminist insights: the personal is political? If people are politically accountable for their personal lives, why put up with a politician who does the "lip limbo," as Don Imus put it, with an intern? How can you excuse that behavior while insisting that sexual harassment laws be broadly enforced? Isn't it hypocritical to attack a conservative Supreme Court nominee for talking dirty to his staff but excuse a liberal president who actually had sex with his?

As a feminist, I flinch every time someone explains that because sex is personal, and therefore private, the president should not have to answer publicly for his sexual conduct. If we say that personal conduct has political implications, we can't also argue that all personal conduct should be shielded from public comment. Stopping sexual harassment and domestic violence, for instance, depends on the notion that personal behavior sometimes warrants public intervention. Of course the president's affair with Monica Lewinsky was personal; what we are trying to figure out is whether this personal conduct should be treated as entirely private or if it requires a public response.

For every person who considers the Clinton-Lewinsky affair categorically private because it was sexual, there's someone else who thinks it's absurd to talk about protecting the privacy of public employees' conduct in a government office. That simplistic view is equally unconvincing. Personal behavior in public places is often treated as private. Sexual-harassment law regulates only *unwelcome* sexual conduct in the workplace. Conversations in public phone booths are protected from government surveillance. Parents discipline children on playgrounds and lovers quarrel in restaurants, yet there is no public obligation—or prerogative—to get involved in these personal relationships unless the nature of the behavior itself warrants public intervention. The question for feminists is whether President Clinton's personal conduct demands a public political response.

There are some ways public officials might behave in their personal lives that would seem to preclude feminist support. Suppose the president had physically forced Lewinsky to perform oral sex or threatened to fire her if she refused his advances. In the first case he'd be subject to criminal prosecution and in the other to a slam-dunk sexual-harassment suit, provided Lewinsky alleged it was the reason for her sexual compliance. But an act's political importance can no more be determined by saying the conduct was illegal than by saying it was private. For feminists, as for legislators deciding what constitutes an impeachable offense, the problem is more complicated. Suppose we learned that President Clinton had agreed to pay for his daughter's college education only on the condition that she give up her interest in science for the more appropriately "feminine" study of home economics. Many Americans would no doubt see this legally permissible conduct as the president's private business, but it would surely trouble feminists.

The common feature of these bad-behavior hypotheticals is coercion—a clear, coercive use of power that denies a woman's independent will. Coercion is the central feminist concern in sexual relations between women and men, and Monica Lewinsky describes her affair with President Clinton as noncoercive. By all accounts, she welcomed their sexual contact. That would be the end of the matter in an affair between autonomous equals. But he is president and she was an intern. Not only is there a tremendous disparity in their public power, he was her supervisor. In those circumstances, power can be abused without overt coercion. It's hard

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to picture the president of the United States receiving oral sex from a White House intern without seeing something exploitative about the situation. To punish the president's behavior as *categorically* coercive, though, we would have to ignore or contradict Lewinsky's testimony that she was a willing participant in the relationship—a denial of her own willing agency that itself gets uncomfortably close to coercion. I see nothing to be gained here by a public response that denies a woman's autonomy in order to save it.

Focusing on coercion easily distinguishes the Clinton-Lewinsky liaison from Anita Hill's allegations about now-Justice Clarence Thomas. Though Hill's accusations did not involve physical contact, she testified that she felt trapped by her boss's repeated insistence that she stay and listen to his pornographic soliloquies even after she had clearly communicated her discomfort. Lewinsky actively sought sexual contact with the president. Treating the two situations alike is consistent only if one is simply opposed to sex. Feminists are used to being called the antisex brigade when we complain about sexual coercion. It's ironic to face the same tired mischaracterization for failing to complain about noncoercive sex.

But what about Kathleen Willey? She claims that when she asked the president for a job he mashed her. If it is true, Willey's story is much more problematic for feminists than the president's affair with Lewinsky. I can't agree with Gloria Steinem that the behavior Willey describes is basically noncoercive. Putting the moves on someone who has come to you for a job is unquestionably an abuse of power. Sure, Willey says that when she told him to stop he did. But if she is to be believed, isn't it clear the president was trying to coerce her into having sex by implicitly offering her a quid pro quo—service me and I'll make you ambassador? The truth is that if the independent counsel's report focused on the sort of conduct Kathleen Willey alleged, supporting Bill Clinton would have been much more difficult for feminists.

WHY DO I say "difficult" and not "precluded"? Because, if politically objectionable sexual conduct precludes feminist support for a public official, then not only is the personal political, it trumps all other political conduct. But why should seeing the political importance of personal conduct mean that public acts no longer count? Why isn't it fair to find President Clinton's personal behavior politically offensive and still conclude that it is outweighed by his willingness to publicly promote women's political agenda? For that matter, his personal behavior might be less important than his public *betrayals* of women.

For many feminists, the political significance of the president's sexual conduct is overshadowed by his endorsement of the welfare reform bill of 1996. That Act, which begins, "Marriage is the foundation of a successful society," denies women the right to public support for their children's and their own survival. The man who signed this legislation was not exactly an unblemished feminist hero before we found out about his affair with Lewinsky or heard Willey's accusations. Of course he is also the man who championed family and medical work leave. He has defended abortion rights in a number of tough situations. It's a mixed record. To me, it makes perfect sense to study the whole record before deciding how to respond to his politically offensive sexual conduct. People who find that approach hypocritical must think that personal conduct always takes precedence. It seems strange to have to protest that regular old public-style political acts still count too.

One reason we have hesitated to contextualize our political assessment of Clinton's personal conduct might be that we confused that judgment with a decision under sexual-harassment law. A legal determination of liability for harassment does not turn on whether the defendant has been generally sensitive to women's interests. Nor does it matter that holding him liable will benefit other employers whose policies are far worse for women. That doesn't mean those aren't valid political considerations. In fact, whether or not you think law can or should be apolitical, ruling out those sorts of factors is what is supposed to distinguish legal judgments from political policy choices. Hold on, though. Is the feminist conundrum here just a matter of poli-

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tics? We sometimes shy away from calling feminist goals political, in order to anchor feminism in a moral-rights claim that transcends politics. Yet it seems necessary to consider the surrounding context, including the president's public record, whether the ultimate source of a feminist program is moral or political, when deciding how a continued Clinton presidency advances or hampers a feminist program.

Then again, we often assume that, regardless of public appearances, someone's personal behavior reveals his or her true self. We understand public acts as formal, costumed, shaped to create an impression if not deliberately to deceive. But people are not always more "themselves" in their personal relations. We play roles in private settings, too. Still, how someone acts when he thinks no one's looking can unmask aspects of his private life. The president's public presentation of himself as a faithful husband was pretty well shattered by the revelation of his affair with Monica Lewinsky. But the effect of that affair, and of Kathleen Willey's allegations, on our image of the president as someone who stands up for women's rights is more problematic. Standing up for rights is a fundamentally public activity. It is not so clear that conflicting personal behavior always renders that sort of public stance inauthentic.

If what you want ultimately from a political leader is public representation, it may not make a lot of sense to use his personal conduct as the litmus test for his political principles. Lincoln's behavior toward African Americans in his personal life is surely politically significant. Even so, if blacks continued to support a Lincoln presidency after learning of some racist personal conduct on his part, I doubt many of the rest of us would call them hypocrites. In a less Olympian realm, it may have been unwise to treat Senator Robert Packwood's public record of support for women's interests as irrelevant once he was discovered to be a chronic sexual harasser.

I don't mean to suggest that politically obnoxious personal behavior can never render someone unfit to publicly represent women's political interests. Senator Packwood's may have been just such a case. The point is that it makes sense to look at the whole picture—to weigh the political importance of the particular personal conduct against the value of the person's public political acts and to see how the person's whole record looks in light of the political alternatives. For some reason, both feminists and their critics have often treated sexual misconduct as a kind of automatic disqualifier from public life. Why shouldn't it instead be treated like every other politically significant act?

In some sense it would be poetically just if the president were vanquished by the same moralizing conservatives he was pandering to when he signed the welfare bill. When people say they understand why the president lied under oath about his sex life, I wonder what they would say about a woman on welfare who lied about sex to preserve benefits for her family. Popular concern for the privacy rights of the highest federal employee strikes me as a bit more solicitous than the prevailing attitude about how much privacy is due some other recipients of federal benefits. Still, Clinton's downfall would hardly be a feminist victory. The main advocates for public punishment of the president's personal behavior have been anything but progressive on women's rights. In fact, they are so far to the political right they manage to make Henry J. Hyde, the chair of the House Judiciary Committee, look moderate. But remember the Hyde Amendment? That's the law that prohibits using Medicaid funds to provide abortions. So where does that leave us?

If there's anything to be gained for feminists here, it must be some further insight about the political significance of personal behavior. I've been puzzling over how to express it: The personal isn't only political? The personal is part of the political? The personal is always political, but not necessarily public? It's clear that viewing the personal as political makes it impossible for us to dismiss politically troubling personal behavior just by labeling it "private." But that view does not force us to jettison any political representative whose personal conduct transgresses feminist principles, no matter what the public cost. Having smudged the lines between personal and political, private and public, we need to consider the meaning of per-

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sonal behavior in its full context, without denying either the complexity of the political world or our political principles. ●

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David Bromwich

On Privacy

WHAT HAS struck many observers by now is the failure of the ordinary system of legal checks to assist the country in a time of constitutional crisis. The failure has several dimensions: the arrogance of the courts, which stripped a president of the security of office and the trust of friendship; the bureaucratic timidity of the Justice Department, which allowed the independent counsel to pursue his revisions of the Constitution without challenge; above all, the silence of the legal profession, from which some stirrings of indignation might have been expected in a society where respect for the law and the perpetuation of liberty are not accidentally related. But perhaps the mistake was ours, too. We have relied on lawyers too much for our liberty—forgetting that they are all in some degree legalists, and the best of them necessarily pieceworkers. The Supreme Court looked on Paula Jones's civil suit as a thing to itself, a piece they were not obliged to set in any larger picture. In the language of the Constitution, there is nothing about a suit against a standing president by an inflamed citizen with a personal grievance. The argument for postponing the trial—that it would become a national distraction—was a matter about which the justices felt compelled to have no professional opinion. They had only to ask themselves, like lawyers: why should it be a distraction?

Justice Antonin Scalia's tone when he asked this question—you can hear it on the Internet—was jaunty, sarcastic, dismissive. So, what any citizen could have told the Supreme Court justices about distraction, and about the tenor of American public life, they could not legalistically consent to see for themselves. As for the formal respect for Kenneth Starr among lawyers of moderate or liberal views, the reason again lies in the professional metaphysics of piecework. They judge him by the part of his career that is familiar to them, and what they see is a fellow member of the legal elite, who, as solicitor general and as judge, bore all the markings of a reasonable man. They do not see the man of whom less professional observers have formed a vivid image: the fundamentalist zealot who corrected himself for ambition's sake, hoping for a seat on the Supreme Court, but who, disappointed of that prize and on the verge of academic obscurity, found in some taped conversations about the president a stimulus impossible to resist, and hired a team spearheaded by small-town prosecutors—bullies, religious enthusiasts, and of course sex-mad, but invigorating helps for a desk lawyer who had never presented evidence to a grand jury, and did not so much as interview a witness in all his exertions to bring down a president of the United States.

This experiment on the happiness of the American people has also been the work of the mass media. But we need another name for the culture of mock-scandalized horror and euphoria, which, with the publication of the Starr Report, has become America's leading export of morals and manners to the world. It is not right to call these people reporters anymore. They do more than report, and they do less. They ask questions in a reflexive format that scarcely requires an informing idea ("Bill Kristol, how do you react to that?"), and they give inside estimates of the rhetorical calculations they suppose are the essence of political thought. They know close to nothing about the immediate background of current events or about the history of the regions they cover,

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which are rapidly shrinking to the White House, the White House, and the White House. They are now an autonomous milieu of pure publicity: the talking carriers of the media manner, their faces drawn in the permanent rictus of a faintly amused half smile. They represent the finishing touch in America's long work of perfecting the arts of insincerity. With concern, they tell us that they cannot talk to their children about the president. Meanwhile, we cannot talk to our children about them. The prestige of a career in politics has declined in the last generation. Yet far below politicians, on the scale of moral dignity, all thoughtful children now rate lawyers, and far below lawyers the media.

If a boy or girl today were to confess an ambition to go into politics, one would feel some reserve; if a career in law, pity for the sacrifice of mother-wit; but any decent parent would *shame* a child out of aspiring to the status of a Tim Russert, a Cokie Roberts, a Chris Matthews. Maybe, in a previous life, these people were good for something. They have metamorphosed into screenmasters whose only motive is curiosity, whose only standard of judgment is "Will it play?"—posers, the sham piety of whose sentiments is exceeded only by the savagery of their voyeurism. Hypocrisy is always glib, as these people are glib. And hypocrisy has never meant to fail to practice what you preach—that is just human weakness—but rather the pretense of cherishing feelings you do not really cherish. In earlier ages, it was done to a canting and whining accompaniment. The innovation of Sam and Tim and Chris and Cokie and George and George, and all the rest of that crew, has been to prove that the solemn posture is consistent with gaping and giggling.

BETWEEN the silent industry of the lawyers and the splatter of daily disclosures, something ordinary yet remarkable, something in fact almost miraculous, was happening in the minds of Americans. Most of them saw what the publicists did not want them to see, that the story of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky was political after all, and part of a larger world than politics. It is an episode in the destruction of privacy that has become the totalitarian democratic project of our time. This recognition emerged first in the wide disparity between the reactions of the press and the people to Clinton's speech of August 17, 1998. When the looked-for gesture of contrition did not occur, the media pronounced his dry and dignified utterance the worst speech in memory and began to subject it to a novel therapy of collective rewriting. What should he have said? The great presider over political sinning and repenting, Senator Orrin Hatch, the man with the lowest boiling point in all of Congress, was quoted with awe by the media when he offered an "olive branch" to the president, on condition that he produce a speech sufficiently servile and abject. Hatch's judgment of the actual text of the speech, "What a jerk," was quoted with respect for its canny statesmanship. And yet some things about the speech had impressed people not ordinarily susceptible to the charms of this president. It was a speech not a talk. It was public, rather than confessional. It was concise—unlike almost every previous utterance of Bill Clinton's—and it made a consistent point. He admitted his faults as a man, and suggested that these, while worthy of rebuke, were not properly the subject of a major national investigation. He stood on his rights as a citizen, and deplored the searches, seizures, and interrogations that have exposed him and his friends and associates to a mortification without precedent in American history, and without sanction in the Constitution. This was not enough for tastes now seasoned to the refinements of the media. It miscarried, for the anchor people, in two ways at once. It was too personal in its protest against the independent counsel, and too lofty in its disdain for the national pornographic dialogue. Also, it was not said on bended knee—the greatest mistake of all. They wanted him to grovel.

Few of the gossiping moralists tried to put into words the exact formulation they would have preferred to hear from the president on this occasion. They kept their disapproval pure by keeping it theoretical; and the reason was, they did not know what they wanted him to say. They were running ahead of themselves and ahead of the story—wondering, for example, why he did not apologize to the

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Lewinsky family, without knowing that he had done so, hours before, in the "secret" grand-jury testimony whose secrecy he knew would not be respected; so that the apology had, in his mind, already the quality of a public fact. What more was he to say? "I apologize to the American people for having lied to them in order to protect the privacy of my family, which I had exposed to embarrassment by my own conduct. I lied also in order to defend the dignity of my office, which I had injured but not destroyed by an unconsidered series of private acts." Would that have done it? Probably not—it is not yet prostrate enough. But a national leader who said even that much would sound like a man preparing to surrender his leadership; and much as he has given up at various times, and on various issues, Bill Clinton was not yet ready to surrender entirely.

As one watched the debate unfold, one could not help recalling that the president has done more than anyone else to sink our politics to the level of "conversation," a mode of conversation particularly modeled on the soap opera, the radio or television call-in, and the encounter group. In the fifties, on television, there was a sick game show with elements drawn from soap opera, called *Queen for a Day.* Women of humble lives and disastrous fortunes would tell their sob stories, and the studio audience, wrenched by the spectacle of grueling misery, would choose by measure of an applause meter the one they thought most pitiful, the winner being awarded her choice of a refrigerator, a washing machine, a week in Florida, or whatever basket of goodies the sponsor had prepared. Clinton, stung by his ordeal, has now mined deeply in this native ore of tear trawling, but he dipped into it long before, and his being known to perform in that element is one of the hidden causes of his trouble. He is a strange combination, too strange to duplicate, or to be quite representative of anything but himself, whatever people say about the spirit of the sixties. He has philanthropic instincts, with unlimited personal appetites; a partly selfless ambition, with courage that hardly serves him but on selfish occasions; a gift for friendship and none for loyalty; genuine humility and genuine vulgarity, all most strangely rounded by a rational yuppie appreciation of the glitz of the world. He approaches a good deal of his own life as a spectator, even now, and this has always carried extreme dangers of which he appears unaware. He was wrong to take us down the road of a personal politics. The media have been doubly wrong in their effort to keep us there, and, with a prosecutor feeding them lines, to instruct us in the pleasures of making and punishing a scapegoat. The president's late-found desire to lift the nation to a semblance of public discourse is in his self-interest, but it is also in the nation's interest, and we ought to observe the irony with an unrebuking silence.

It is not surprising that black Americans should sympathize with a president hounded all the way from an Arkansas hotel to the illusory shelter of a summit conference in Moscow. But in this they seem to represent, only with greater intensity, the feelings of most Americans outside the thrall of the media. Who but a besotted moralist like William Bennett, or an on-the-run strategist like William Kristol, would now pretend for a moment that the incontinence of Bill Clinton is any match for the indecency of Kenneth Starr? Still, the most cynical observer could not have predicted the reversal by which conservative Republicans would embrace real-life pornography as a means of achieving the sanctification of private life and the family. They stand exposed as fanatics to the core, and fanatics of a changeable hue, for whom their ends can justify any means, while the ends themselves change to suit the tactics of the year or the month. Yet the fanatics have worked with materials ready to hand. The O.J. Simpson trial was a watershed. There an important ideal of privacy, and an ideal of public dignity, were broken while the spectators had their attention fixed on details. The private deliberation of jurors (a deep convention among the rituals of civic conscience) was tampered with regularly by the press, and the judge in that case went far to foster the understanding that no power on earth could limit the contest of wills between determined lawyers.

A more disturbing precedent, and closer to the burden of the charges against Bill Clinton, was the confirmation hearings for

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Clarence Thomas. The liberal notion about that event has been that it opened a broadcast seminar for the older male elite who "just didn't get it" regarding the theory of sexual harassment. But the decorous response of some senators was a proof not only of obtuseness, but of acquired decency, a trait not much remarked because not much possessed by the left-wing Senate staffers who dragged Anita Hill into the spotlight. Then it was the feminists, among full-time opinion makers, who were willing to bring under a glare of hideous publicity a forgotten private trespass, and to break new bounds in the grossness of public revelations so long as in the process they could secure the defeat of a nominee they loathed. What Clarence Thomas saw on the Coke can, and what he said about it, had exactly as much relevance to his candidacy for the Supreme Court as the physical acts of the president with Monica Lewinsky have to his capacity to execute faithfully the duties of his office.

THE LOBBYISTS of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Christian Coalition, and the politicians who serve their will in spectacles like these, have been doing something terrible to our institutions, as Clarence Thomas said during his ordeal. But, by the wreck of privacy generally, the media are doing something far more dangerous. They are giving themselves permission. For what they do to the president of the United States, they may do more easily to ordinary citizens, and we can be sure that they will do it in the future when the projected obtainable ratings are high enough. Thus the door that some Democrats swung open in the Thomas hearings, with their sacred doctrine of "the asymmetry of power in the workplace" (they will take another ten years to solve the asymmetry of power in life)—that door, the Republican Party walked through in January 1998 and beckoned the press and the American people to follow. The press followed eagerly. So far, the people have not. Whether or not the refusal continues long, there is cause to celebrate the durability of their skepticism.

The resistance called for a certain stamina, but it did not require much reflection. It is the feelings of the people that are natural on this issue. It is the feelings of the investigators, and their tools in the media, that have coarsened to an amazing degree. The Gingrich-Kristol revolution is a combined assault of sex mania and publicity, with steady doses of obscenity administered as a healthful emetic to a valetudinarian populace, who are expected to deplore with proper solemnity what they obediently consume. Out of the daily glut and purge of nauseous matter, these statesmen hope to bring forth what their advisers call a virtuous polity. The procedure has proved too intricate for the public mind, which looks on it as a species of blackmail. "Change those poll numbers and change them fast, or we are going to keep on deluging you with filth." A free people cannot be trusted to comply with requests made in this spirit: they may think it rather an insult to their pride than a compliment to their docility. If, as has been said, a people are ready for liberty when they do not ignore a cruel attack on a fellow citizen in a public street, then Americans these past several months have been acting like a free people, while the media and large elements of the political culture have been acting like slaves. The crime has been an outright assault on the common privacy of a citizen, disguised as a search for the hidden vice of an important neighbor.

Forty-five years ago the workers in East Berlin struck against the communist government, and the government dismissed the uprising as not representative of the real people. Wrote Brecht:

> Would it not be easier
> In that case for the government
> To dissolve the people
> And elect another?

Poor media, they should elect another people. The evolution of the paternal stance from condescending hope ("Wait till they see how ugly the facts really are") to a punitive scorn ("People seem to be worrying only about their pocketbooks") to weary disapproval and finally unconditional reprobation may have been the only comic diversion of 1998, but it was a sideshow fit for a connoisseur. The Republicans in Congress marched through the same stations of generous confidence, annoyance, and disenchantment, first giving out every possible

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document of the investigations to let the people judge, and then, when the judgment did not go their way, taking the high ground of constitutional reserve and a most deliberate deliberation.

AGAIN AND AGAIN in this crisis, one has had to wonder about the value of privacy as an irreducible republican good—a value the investigation of the president has placed so suddenly in such a doubtful light. If we accept an impeachment on the sex data, we will have to embrace some maxims alien to democracy. Senator Joseph Lieberman's "Everyone entering public life must give up his private life" may be the first of these. We will also have to believe, or pretend to believe, a good many patent lies. Solomon Wisenberg, a lesser luminary of Kenneth Starr's office, said in his interrogation of the president on the grand-jury tape, "Mr. President, it is not our intent to embarrass you." But of course that was their intent: to embarrass and humiliate and destroy; to calumniate in the press as a prelude to impeaching in the Congress and indicting in the courts. To what other end could their tactics conceivably point? Privacy is a good, if we agree to call it a good, that comes without much effort to a people early in its exposure to the technologies of information. We have only to decide not to inquire into certain parts of the lives of other people. It takes a more conscious effort on behalf of privacy when so much information is simply available. We then have to decide what facts we will never pay to find, and what inquiries we ought to prohibit in principle. In relation to the technology of trespass, the manners of American liberty are in their infancy now. The media are only the loudest infants, and if one is puzzled to account for their indifference to the methods of Kenneth Starr, the answer may lie chiefly in the nature of the target. Bill Clinton is the most powerful man in the country, and a man with an incurable fondness for public attention. This may have served to lighten the usual prohibitions.

Yet all that is necessary for the morals of a nation to become thoroughly depraved is for people to act and judge by a motive of unfettered curiosity. To repeat: what the media have done and contemplate doing to the life of Bill Clinton, they are in the process of licensing themselves to do, eventually, to any of us. The power and the public status of the target are not themselves what provoked the attack. For a time, they may have been all that deterred it. The rest of us are much less formidably armed against such assaults of publicity. There is hardly a life that will bear to be looked at from every angle, in every corner and hiding place. Our affection for each other as friends, our toleration of each other as neighbors, and our mutual responsibility as citizens depend on our not being interested in knowing every private thing. The line between public and private, so plain to so many Americans, now seems invisible or unimportant to the prosecutors in the Office of the Independent Counsel. And by a professional deformation, an awareness of that line, and so a sense of ordinary shame and decency, have been bred out of the collective character of the national media. It is not yet a crisis of democratic government, though it may be approaching that. It is a crisis in the government of opinion, in which the conveyors of opinion, on whom the public still relies, have played a despicable part. It matters only because we *are* governed by opinion much more than by laws. An opinion backed by approval or disapproval remains preferable to a law, for the same reason that persuasion is preferable to force. But this holds true only for a free people—the sort of people who would want to invent so queer a thing as privacy.

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On the Normalization of South African Politics

Ian Shapiro

THE MOST remarkable thing about South African politics is how unremarkable they have become. I say this as someone born and raised there, who left in the early 1970s at the age of fifteen. On returning for a year's sabbatical leave in Cape Town in 1997, I quickly discovered that the country I grew up in no longer exists. What has replaced it is in some ways more African and in some more cosmopolitan; in almost all respects it is a far cry from the South Africa I departed a quarter of a century ago.

Most striking about South Africa in the 1960s was its extreme isolation. By this I don't only mean its ostracism from the world community. That was tangible enough well over a decade before sanctions would begin biting. But focusing on ostracism misses the degree to which apartheid South Africa's isolation was embraced by much of the white elite, English as well as Afrikaans. Part of this was, no doubt, a defensive response to rejection, but not all of it. It is hard to overstate the degree to which white South Africa saw itself as one of the last outposts of Judeo-Christian civilization, fighting the twin evils of communism in the East and moral and social decay in the West. The ferocious laws designed to suppress communism were paralleled by the often ludicrous but no less seriously meant battery of laws and regulations to halt moral decline. From the Immorality Act, to the laws banning virtually everything except religious service on Sundays, to the laws against every sort of gambling, to anti-drug laws that were harsh even by contemporary American standards, South Africa's governors saw themselves as drawing multiple lines in the sand. Banning *Black Beauty* was perhaps the comic apotheosis of their grotesque endeavor: they thought of themselves as Puritans no less than as racial purists. *Playboy* was banned as pornographic; we had no idea what real pornography was.

Just as white South Africans were massively ignorant of the rejecting world they eschewed, so were they ignorant of black South Africa and its inhabitants. By the 1960s the homeland and Bantustan resettlement policies had herded nonwhites into townships outside the suburbs that ringed the inner cities. Suburban whites felt even more threatened by the blacks they had banished than by the world outside South Africa. We who lived in Johannesburg's northern suburbs never thought of trying to visit Soweto (which was, in any case, illegal), less than half an hour's drive away. Our relations with blacks were limited to the obsequious interchanges characteristic of dealings with servants. Of blacks living further to the north we knew nothing. Our passports were not valid for any African countries even if they had been willing to admit us. The exceptions proving the rule were the Portuguese colonies in Angola and Mozambique. Lorenço Marques (now Maputo) and Beira were seen as places where the risqué few allegedly took off for long weekends involving gambling, drugs, and black prostitutes. These places were said to be rife with syphilis and Arab sailors who would slit your throat for a wristwatch. Respectable people kept away.

THINGS COULD not be more different today. This is most dramatically evident in the changes in urban geography that have turned South African cities inside out. Apartheid cities were well-heeled at the center, banishing poverty and urban squalor to the townships outside. Now South Africa has American-style inner cities that the white middle classes avoid as much as possible, limiting their pathways to business districts and

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daylight hours. Hillbrow, which had been a center of Johannesburg's nightlife and progressive culture (such as it was), is now a stark and frightening shadow of its former self. The signs of violent crime, and measures to prevent it, are everywhere: bank guards carry automatic weapons in plain view, squalor and destitution abound. In the suburbs, garden walls have grown into fortresses topped with barbed wire and ostentatious alarm systems. The inner cities have been ceded. Instead of locking blacks out, whites now lock themselves in.

Fear of crime is rampant, endlessly sensationalized in the media. This too has an American ring in that whites mainly talk about crime while blacks mainly suffer it. The great majority of violent crime is committed by poor non-whites against poor non-whites, much of it in the course of gang violence associated with drugs and organized crime. Certainly whites, especially lower-middle-class whites, also feel vulnerable. The high incidence of daylight armed robbery, rape, and visibly threatening poverty amid plenty, makes this inevitable. Yet here too South Africa no longer seems exceptional. Cape Town is like Los Angeles: what life is like depends on where you live. Rondebosch and much of the southern suburbs could easily be Beverly Hills or Brentwood; the Cape Flats could be Watts. The parallels in between hold as well. Sea Point used to be a quiet, largely Jewish retirement neighborhood. Now it is more like West Hollywood with its adult video stores, bars, and strip joints. The wealthy protect themselves with sophisticated security systems in gated communities staffed by private security forces. The poor fend for themselves with little help from often corrupt and in any case massively overworked police. Those in the middle manage as best they can. Politicians grandstand with ever more draconian proposals. Turning unused gold mines two miles underground into prisons was one of the more notable ministerial suggestions of 1997. Why didn't Pete Wilson think of that? Dramatic as the residents find the changes, they are part of the normalization of South African life. The norms are depressing, no doubt, but why should we expect things to be different?

The urban geography story is the tip of an iceberg. Much white fear and black propaganda is about Africanization, yet the degree of Americanization is more striking. In the 1970s there was no television and the press was myopically inward-looking. Our news from the outside world came from British Movietone newsreels, often weeks out of date, shown in cinemas before feature films. Today television is filled with American fare, CNN is broadcast nightly, and the movies (no longer called films) in the theaters are identical to those playing in every American city. The markets and shopping malls contain African curios, but also streams of Chicago Bulls paraphernalia and the like. Figures like Michael Jordan, Wesley Snipes, and Michael Jackson are immensely popular. Despite continuing British influence manifested in Land Rovers on the streets, the BBC, cricket, rugby, and soccer, it is U.S. influence that seems ascendant. American fast-food chains litter the cities as they do here. IBM, Jeep, and Kodak are making rapid inroads into markets abandoned to the Europeans and Japanese during the sanctions era. The upscale shopping malls at the Waterfront or in Cavendish Square in Cape Town are packed with the same clothes, computers, sports equipment, videos, and CDs that one finds in any comparable American mall. McWorld seems to be embraced with open arms through much of the social order. It is, indeed, striking how little anti-American sentiment one discerns. Perhaps this is one of the final ironies of apartheid's legacy: white Afrikaner culture now absorbs much hostility that might otherwise be directed at American cultural imperialism.

South Africa's politics have become notably banal. Under World Bank and various forms of corporate pressure, the African National Congress (ANC)-led government quickly abandoned its (moderately) redistributive Reconstruction and Development Program in favor of a conventional neoliberal economic restructuring diet intended to produce Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) by cutting public spending, limiting the deficit, holding taxes down, reducing inflation, and privatization. GEAR has been

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in place for over two years without producing discernible growth, employment, or redistribution. Although inflation has been brought down into single digits and spending targets have been more or less met, only the informal economy appears vibrant. Employment in the formal sector continues to shrink due to a weak gold price and the loss of industrial jobs to the East. The currency has lost over a third of its value since as recently as March 1997, and high interest rates (well over 20 percent for most purposes) stifle domestic entrepreneurship. This is not to mention their effect on the poor, who might otherwise use the sixteen thousand rand (about $2,700) government grants to leverage the cost of building a house. The ANC's 1994 pledge to build a million houses over five years (widely seen as responsibly moderate at the time) is less than 10 percent fulfilled. Minimal inroads have been made into transforming the educational and health care systems, particularly in rural areas, so that millions continue to live without the most rudimentary provisions.

That the government finds reality so difficult to reshape is less deserving of comment than how it, and other powerful political players, respond to this fact. As the ANC drifts to the right, most of the official opposition parties are either indistinguishable from it or to its right on most matters of political economy. The National Party is riven by internal conflicts and a terminal identity crisis. The Democratic Party looks healthier, particularly in the Western Cape; polls reveal it to be the principal beneficiary of National Party disarray (though some Nationalists will move to the minuscule right-wing Freedom Front). Democratic Party members see themselves as the middle-of-the-road, pro-business "sensible chaps party," and although there is a good deal of energy in their younger, increasingly Afrikaner, leadership ranks, it is doubtful that their support will break into double digits in the 1999 elections or that they will develop significant nonwhite grass roots. The Inkatha Freedom Party, the ethnic Zulu party that has historically favored privatization, has not opposed GEAR (Inkatha remains a junior partner in the government). It shows no signs of developing into a national party. Even in its regional stronghold in Natal, Inkatha has the support of only about half of the Zulu population. The United Democratic Party, organized by Roelf Meyer, formerly of the National Party, and Bantu Holomisa, ousted from the ANC, takes few identifiable stands on policy questions. It seems to want to occupy whatever ground might open up between the ANC, the Democratic Party, and the remnants of the National Party, while linking itself decisively to the new order. (Hence its acronym UDP, evidently intended to be as close as possible to that of the United Democratic Front, the fulcrum of the 1980s resistance movement until the unbanning of the ANC.) Some polls show the UDP garnering support in the high single digits. But no one sees it as a serious challenger to the ANC. In any case it does not criticize GEAR. The one party that one might have expected to emerge on the left is the Pan Africanist Congress, but it remains in the same disarray as when it garnered negligible support in the 1994 elections. In any case it makes few public statements on macroeconomic policy.

All this means that the opposition parties are largely irrelevant to the political choices of the day, which are played out within the ANC. Here one might expect opposition to neoliberalism to manifest itself, but the main likely vehicles are all problematic. The Communist Party remains part of the ANC alliance, along with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). As elsewhere in the world, the communists are in disarray. Some of their leaders and intellectuals march in lock step with the ANC leadership. Others criticize it regularly, in the press if not in Parliament. But because everyone knows that the CP would not win a single seat if it ran outside the ANC alliance, it has no real leverage over decision-making.

COSATU's relationship with the ANC leadership is more multifaceted. One might expect it to be a major constraint on neoliberal policies like GEAR and a force for downward redistribution, and to a limited extent it is. Although COSATU endorsed the ANC's recommitment to GEAR at its late 1997 conference, it also got much of what it wanted included in the Basic Conditions of Employment legisla-

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tion passed at around the same time, over strong objections from business, and in contradiction to GEAR's logic. The increases in the minimum wage and a forty-five-hour work week contained in the bill are not only resisted by business, however. Given South Africa's exceedingly high unemployment (somewhere between 25 percent and 33 percent, depending on whose statistics you believe), these policies are contentious within the labor movement. South Africa's corporatist policy-making bodies such as the National Economic Development and Labor Council involve big business and big labor, but not regional unions (not to mention the unemployed) whose members may stand to lose all employment if wages are not permitted to fall. COSATU argues that the unemployed are substantially dependent on the employed, so that there is not really a conflict of interest as far as fighting for high wages is concerned. This may be true some of the time, but it glosses over important issues of gender and urban-rural inequality, and in any case it ignores greater net gains that might be achieved if unemployment could be reduced. The Basic Conditions bill is an obstacle to this to the degree that it is enforced, though what this degree is remains unclear.

THIS LAST point merits emphasis in countries like South Africa, which have severely constrained institutional enforcement capacities. Parliament passes all kinds of (often contradictory) legislation that emanates from different ministries (GEAR from the Finance Ministry, the Basic Conditions bill from the Ministry of Labor) and in response to different interest groups, but this says little about what is actually implemented on the ground. In the case of the Basic Conditions bill, for instance, it may well be that regional unions and employers conspire to ignore it. By the same token, the high unemployment statistics may reflect other weak institutional capacities. The informal sector of the economy is obviously thriving, but little of it appears in government statistics because people want to avoid taxation. The multimillion Rand taxi business is a good example. The government is powerless to collect revenue from it, and most of the thousands of people who work in it may well be counted as unemployed. The considerable distance between Parliament's will and what actually happens is a severe practical constraint on the ANC. Even the "independent" reserve bank is a lot more constrained than those of less vulnerable economies, as we saw in mid-1997, when speculative attacks on the rand forced an abrupt about-face of its announced policy of bringing down interest rates to stimulate the economy and promote domestic entrepreneurship. South Africa's foreign-exchange reserves are no greater than a medium-sized hedge fund. This makes the country an exceedingly weak player in the poker game of currency speculation.

Why does COSATU not push for more redistribution? Remarkably, South African tax rates are comparatively low (the top tax rate is similar to that of the United States, low by world standards). Why is there not more pressure from the organized left to redistribute downward through the tax system, either directly in the form of transfer payments or indirectly in the form of funding public works? Ironically, part of the answer may lie in the highly skewed income distribution itself: raising taxes on even the top 20 percent would mean new taxation of many COSATU members. Combine this with the high unemployment levels, and it becomes less surprising that redistributive pressure from COSATU is so muted. For the most part, redistribution to those at or near the bottom would involve the transfer of resources and benefits to people significantly below the economic levels of COSATU members. And substantial redistribution would take some of these resources from them.

If not organized labor, what of a populist revolt among the ANC grass roots from those who are seeing few or no improvements in their lives—such as the unemployed, the sort of people Winnie Madikizela-Mandela can mobilize? In a country with the high levels of mobilization that South Africa has seen over the past decade and a half, one might anticipate that this would carry over into pressure on the ANC from below.

The fact that Madikizela-Mandela was outmaneuvered in her 1997 bid for the deputy

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leadership of the ANC with virtually no fuss (aside from the drumbeat of hysteria in the white press until it was accomplished) suggests that grass-roots populism has some distance to travel as an effective force within the ANC. This might change, but there are major obstacles. Half of the unemployed live in rural areas, making them exceedingly difficult to mobilize. Those who live in urban areas (mainly squatters' camps in and around the towns and cities) might seem more likely candidates, but there are plenty of Latin American and Asian illustrations of the proposition that the urban poor can remain politically unmobilized for decades. Moreover, the ANC is not ignoring this group entirely. Many squatters' camps have some, admittedly minimal, basic amenities that they lacked five years ago. I have seen uniformed government employees cleaning street gutters in Nelson Mandela Park squatters' camp in Hout Bay. Initially it is an incongruous sight, alongside the tattered washing strung between corrugated iron shacks and the scrawny roaming dogs. But small absolute increases in living conditions may not be so lightly dismissed by the inhabitants of these camps. If you have been living amid stinking refuse for years it makes a difference when it is removed. Radicals have been disappointed for centuries when the dispossessed fail to make global distributional comparisons, focusing instead either on their own absolute conditions or on those closest to them in the socioeconomic order. Little is known about the expectations of South Africa's poor, but there is no evidence that the ANC is losing much support among them. Support for all political parties has softened somewhat, but it remains substantially where it was in 1994. No one expects the 1999 election results to be significantly different.

Some political commentators excoriate the ANC for having sold out on the revolution in South Africa. To me these critics seem to miss the fact that there never was a revolution. There was instead a negotiated settlement, designed in no small part to head off the possibility of revolution. The political pact that led to the transition seems underwritten by an implicit social contract between the new political elite and those with economic power: the still overwhelmingly white landed and business elites. The government avoids putting large-scale expropriation or increases in taxation on the table, it does not interfere with the self-protection of gated communities, and it largely toes the line so far as neo-liberal economic reform is concerned. The quid for the quo is that the economic elites do not defect. Indeed, they may actually be supporting the ANC government more than most people realize. South African political parties are not required to divulge their sources of financial support. At one conference on parties where I questioned the wisdom of this, I found the ANC representatives more hostile to disclosure than anyone else. This naturally prompts the suspicion that they would be the most embarrassed were the sources of their funds to become public. This is yet another area in which the dilemmas of South African politics seem all too familiar to the American observer.

More apposite than proclamations that the ANC has sold out on the revolution was the prediction of one friend after the 1994 election that now Mandela would find out what it's like to be a black city mayor in the United States. It is easy to be taken aback by the extent to which this is true. In interviews with several ministers and deputy-ministers in May of 1998, I was struck by how much they have embraced the same mantra as New Democrats in the United States and New Labour in Britain. Phrases like "individual responsibility" and "budget constraints" fell effortlessly from their lips as they told of the limits within which they operate, insisted on the importance of reinventing and downsizing government, and of privatizing as much as possible, even public works. As with GEAR, one wonders whether these policies actually have more to do with satisfying particular interest groups than with providing what South Africa most needs. The trouble with endlessly positioning oneself to have the "correct" incentives for the private investor is that often this will not result in the delivery of goods and services to poor populations. Moreover, the goalposts continually shift. Given the speed with which capital moves in the world today, there will always be destinations that

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provide more attractive returns. The result is that governments committed to this strategy find it increasingly difficult to keep control of their policy agendas. It might make more sense for South Africa to focus less on elusive foreign investment for a while, and more on getting interest rates down and stimulating the domestic economy, worrying less about deficits and inflation and more about growth and employment. (After all, the Asian miracles of the 1970s and 1980s were not achieved in open economies.) That suggestions of this sort seem to fall on deaf ears in the ANC should scarcely surprise us. If those who benefit from the neoliberal juggernaut can get their way in countries that have had institutionalized social democratic politics for decades, why would they not get it here? ●

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The End of the Yeltsin Era

Robert V. Daniels

THE COLLAPSE of the Soviet Communist regime in 1991 is widely explained as the failure of a utopian experiment. In reality communism ceased to be much of an experiment within months after the October Revolution. The true failed utopian experiment was Russia's adventure in free-market capitalism from 1991 until this year. The cumulative disaster of this course was evident early on to anyone not disabled by the ideological blinders of the Chicago School economists, but the crisis of August 1998 finally drove home (to everyone but President Clinton and his advisers, it seems) the futility of proceeding on the path of Yeltsin-style "reform."

Russian economic policy under Boris Yeltsin, like the breakup of the Soviet Union, was driven neither by ideology nor by practicality, but rather by Yeltsin's personal vendetta against Mikhail Gorbachev and a determination to undo everything the latter stood for. Having faced down the coup plotters of August 1991 and having presided over the collapse of Communist Party rule, Yeltsin embraced the free-market theory touted by Yegor Gaidar and the new school of Russian economists enthralled with the antigovernment doctrines of the Chicago School. Under Gaidar as the first postcommunist economic chief and acting prime minister, Russia launched into reform: price controls were removed, inflation soared, and state-owned assets were indiscriminately privatized, all to the advantage of former Soviet managers and the banking conglomerates that quickly sprang up. The disruptiveness of Gaidar's reforms aroused the ire of the existing parliament—the Russian Supreme Soviet elected in 1990—and Yeltsin compromised in December 1992 by installing the former gas-industry minister Viktor Chernomyrdin as prime minister. Chernomyrdin was inclined to a centrist balance of markets and state management, but to keep his new job he had to bend to Yeltsin's will throughout the crisis year of 1993.

A second, even harder-edged period of "reform" set in after Yeltsin blasted the old Parliament out of existence and imposed a Constitution made to order for his own authoritarian instincts. Nothing then stood between Russia and dictatorship. The newly elected Duma, though its majority were oppositionists of the Communist and nationalist persuasions, was virtually powerless, and the prime minister served at the pleasure of the president. The only thing that saved the country from the sce-

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nario of Napoleon III in France in 1851 or that of Augusto Pinochet in Chile in 1973 was the president's state of health and his cycles of inactivity. Yeltsin turned economic policy over to the arch-privatizer and free-marketeer First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais, and Chernomyrdin had to go along again despite repeated humiliations. He was tolerated as Chubais's nominal chief and frontman, to avoid the confrontation with the Duma that the required confirmation of a new prime minister would provoke.

Under Chubais's influence the government ousted Viktor Gerashchenko, the easy-credit head of the central bank, and attacked the problem of inflation through monetary starvation, allowing debts and wage arrears to pile up and driving much of the economy into barter deals and hand-to-mouth subsistence. This was the real shock therapy, or rather economic bleeding, like the medical treatments of yore. At the same time, privatization was stepped up, especially in natural resources, cementing in place the oligarchy of crony capitalism. Income disparities between the wealthy and the masses reached third world proportions. Free trade drowned native industry and agriculture in a flood of imports, including as much as half the country's food consumption (the balance being produced mostly in private gardens). Capital accumulated from speculation or from natural-resource exports was squirreled away in Swiss bank accounts and London real estate, to the tune of perhaps $100 billion a year, offsetting all the foreign aid, loans, and investment that came into Russia. In an exchange with a Russian historian, I suggested that Russia had Russified communism more than communism had communized Russia. "I agree," he replied, "and the same thing is happening with capitalism."

This year, finally, the Asian economic crisis, along with Yeltsin's erratic leadership and his installation of a cabinet under Sergei Kiriyenko inimical to the financial oligarchy, shattered the confidence of outside lenders and investors. Foreign money fled Russia, the stock market collapsed, and the ruble broke. "The Kremlin panicked," wrote *Kommersant-Daily*, Russia's *Wall Street Journal*. "The President's week-long silence showed that he is incapable of assuming responsibility. . . . The Kremlin began frantically searching for a candidate capable of replacing not only Kiriyenko today, but also Yeltsin tomorrow. . . . Saving the banks became its paramount objective." Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov and upper house speaker Yegor Stroyev were deemed too threatening to Yeltsin; hence the return to the familiar Chernomyrdin as prime minister. "What has happened," wrote *Izvestia*, "is not just a change of horses in mid-stream, it is a change of parachutes in mid-jump."

RUSSIA'S LEADERSHIP has been overdue for renewal if only on account of the president's disabling physical and mental condition. True, the Russian press and political circles have speculated for years about Yeltsin's pattern of frenzied bursts of activity followed by unexplained periods of withdrawal from the public stage, suggesting alcoholism or bipolar syndrome or a combination thereof. His heart trouble of 1996 is well known, though along with earlier episodes it was covered up by his staff until he had surmounted the hurdle of reelection.

Since that time, in his obvious befuddlement, Yeltsin has largely become the puppet of his staff, his daughter Tatyana Dyachenko, and whoever gets the ear of the real decision makers, who periodically put the president on radio and television to make it appear that he is in charge.

Probably Yeltsin's last act of independent political volition was his decision last March to sack Chernomyrdin, by then his prime minister of five years' standing, evidently because Chernomyrdin's future presidential ambitions had become overly visible. Even the choice of Chernomyrdin's successor, the luckless Kiriyenko, seems to have been pressed upon Yeltsin, who at first thought he could—unconstitutionally—nominate himself to the vacancy. Most of the time during Kiriyenko's five-month tenure of the prime ministership Yeltsin was sick or vacationing, appearing in public only for ceremonial occasions or to stubbornly deny the gathering financial crisis of those months.

Kiriyenko's dismissal in the depths of the devaluation crisis in August was by all accounts (including his own) the work of the financial

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oligarchy, the "gang of seven," spearheaded by Boris Berezovsky. "This week we had planned to put a number of banks under government administration . . . and to begin bankruptcy procedures against major companies," explained Kiriyenko's mentor, the fallen deputy prime minister Boris Nemtsov. "They understood . . . that there might be serious changes in ownership and that the current oligarchy might come to an end. Naturally no acting elite wants to be replaced and so they decided to replace the government." The bankers got through to Yeltsin's daughter and his chief of staff (and former ghost-writer) Valentin Yumashov, who traveled personally to the president's dacha with the necessary documents for him to sign, restoring Chernomyrdin. Said Nemtsov, "The main task that has now been set for Chernomyrdin is to save the oligarchs. . . . Berezovsky is a modern-day Rasputin."

By this time Yeltsin was far removed from governmental realities and only dimly aware either of the Kiriyenko cabinet's reversing him on devaluation of the ruble or of the contradiction between Chernomyrdin's reappointment and his removal in March. The brief statement appointing Chernomyrdin that he read on television on August 24 only blamed the global financial crisis, to answer which, "We need what are known as heavyweights. Chernomyrdin's experience and gravity are necessary"—and, Yeltsin added, qualified him to run for president in the year 2000. A few days later Yeltsin intervened on his own (on television, August 28) to deny rumors that he was about to resign: "I'm not going anywhere. I am not resigning and I will serve out my term." After that he made no public appearances whatsoever throughout the ensuing political crisis, except for the September 2 summit charade with Clinton and then to read (again on television) his statement of September 10 nominating Yevgeny Primakov as prime minister after Chernomyrdin's rejection by the Duma.

With yeltsin's political demise in the August crisis it finally became possible for Russia to reverse course. This was the now almost forgotten accomplishment of Chernomyrdin, during his short-lived return to the prime ministership. Chernomyrdin hinted at his new approach—no doubt the direction he would have preferred all the time he was under Yeltsin's thumb—when he started lobbying for parliamentary support even before Kiriyenko was actually removed. To this end, he proposed a coalition government and an economic agreement with the Duma, where the Communist-led majority was simultaneously considering the end of privatization, the imposition of currency-exchange controls, and printing money to cover salary and pension arrears.

"He is no longer the same Chernomyrdin," explained the upper house of Parliament in giving him an advisory endorsement. Underway here, with the apparent blessing both of the Communists and of the financial oligarchy, was the repudiation of the whole economic program that the Russian government had pursued ever since 1991.

Entering immediately into formal negotiations with the Duma to get himself confirmed as prime minister, Chernomyrdin decreed emergency restrictions on hard-currency trading in order to stanch the run on the ruble. A so-called trilateral commission representing the Duma and its moderate Communist speaker Gennady Seleznyov, the new prime minister, and the presidential staff was formed to work out the political and economic compromise that Chernomyrdin had outlined even before his nomination, including protections for Yeltsin and his family after his expected departure from office. But Communist Party Secretary Gennady Zyuganov and his more orthodox followers balked at Chernomyrdin as Yeltsin's designated successor to the presidency, and Yeltsin's statement of August 28 about not quitting until the year 2000 played right into their hands. The trilateral negotiations continued to work out new directions both politically and economically—Duma support for Chernomyrdin in return for reviving parliamentary government (subjecting cabinet ministers, as well as the prime minister, to Duma confirmation), and tough state intervention in banking and international capital flows, with currency emission and possible price controls. This was a thoroughgoing rejection of the post-1994 phase of Yeltsinism. But it was not enough for Zyuganov; on August 31 his Com-

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munists with their Duma allies and Grigory Yavlinsky's liberals voted Chernomyrdin down on his first try, 251 to 94.

Turning again to the Duma on the second of the three ballots constitutionally allowed him, Chernomyrdin renewed discussions about a political compromise, and proposed a sensational plan: first, print the money to pay back wages and pensions and jump-start the banking system; curb hard-currency trading and compel exporters to turn their earnings over to the state in exchange for rubles; then, impose an "economic dictatorship" and threaten enterprises with bankruptcy or renationalization while promising fairer taxes, tariff protection for domestic producers, and perhaps a currency board on the Latin American model to stabilize the ruble. It would be a "mobilization regime." What was already clearly bankrupt here was the laissez-faire, tight-money philosophy that Chernomyrdin had felt compelled to go along with in the years when Yeltsin was still in the driver's seat.

Chernomyrdin's about-face was heresy to Western governments and the international financial establishment. In fact, Russia's post-1994 tight-money policy was paralyzing the economy through a sort of monetary anemia. This is a condition to which contemporary economists, obsessed with the inflation monster, have given practically no thought. (Paul Krugman of MIT is an exception.) Though most Russian economists found what Chernomyrdin called "a backed and controlled emission" unavoidable, powers ranging from the International Monetary Fund to the United States Treasury threatened to punish the Russian government by cutting off further aid, including the second installment of the promised IMF bailout loan. They did not stop to reflect that Western governments, the United States included, "print" money all the time by borowing from their central banks and manipulating the national credit supply.

In the meantime, not even Chernomyrdin's declaration of independence from Western economic dogma, and a "political truce" surrendering much presidential power (to which Yeltsin actually put his signature), would satisfy the Communists. Against the backdrop of a falling ruble, surging prices for the imported goods that Russia had come to depend on, and panic buying, on September 7 the Duma turned Chernomyrdin down again, 273 to 138 (Vladimir Zhirinovsky's nationalists shifted from the abstention column to back the sinking prime minister.) One more vote would determine an orderly transition with Chernomyrdin or a mandatory dissolution of the Duma that risked national chaos and, in the minds of some, civil war. At this critical point it was the Yeltsin staff, torn apart by the issue, that blinked. Yeltsin's daughter and his chief of staff Yumashov reluctantly gave in, and accepted the compromise candidacy of Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov as prime minister.

Kiriyenko's prime ministership, initiated by Yeltsin's whim, was the new Russia's low point as far as representative government is concerned. Chernomyrdin's return in August pointed to a decisive shift in the power base of the executive branch, from the fiat of the infirm presidency to the blessing of the restive legislative branch. This change was reflected immediately in the negotiations that Chernomyrdin conducted with the Duma leadership, to reach a deal on the basis of a more powerful role for the Duma in return for silence on impeaching Yeltsin for the rest of his term. This was the closest approach to the European parliamentary principle and truly representative government that Russia had ever seen.

Unfortunately this promising potential was unthinkingly scuttled by the Communists. Party Secretary Zyuganov was evidently piqued at the role played by his rival of the moderate Communist faction, Speaker Seleznyov, and could not contain his rancor over Chernomyrdin's years of submissiveness to Yeltsin. Out of these narrow considerations he twice vetoed the Chernomyrdin candidacy that would have put the prime ministership squarely under the thumb of the parliamentarians. He thought he had a victory when the Yeltsin staff accepted Primakov as a compromise candidate—"We are in power now." But Primakov's overwhelming acceptance by the Duma—without any of the conditions that Chernomyrdin was willing to accept—was a vote of relief rather than of conviction. It left

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Primakov far freer of the Duma than Chernomyrdin would have been, responsible to no one other than the president who had nominally appointed him.

Primakov's background is familiar by now—a Middle Eastern specialist and journalist with presumed KGB duties, made a top foreign-policy adviser and candidate member of the Politburo by Gorbachev (the same rank that Yeltsin attained), and then under Yeltsin foreign-intelligence chief and foreign minister. He obviously has a gift for intrigue. Nevertheless, despite his overwhelming endorsement by the Duma, most parties were unenthusiastic about participating in the coalition cabinet that he hoped to form.

His key appointment was Yuri Maslyukov, formerly Gorbachev's economic-planning chief, as first deputy prime minister for the economy. Maslyukov had become a Communist Duma deputy, but leaned to the moderate faction, and actually entered Kiriyenko's government last summer as minister of industry and trade, to the considerable annoyance of Zyuganov and the orthodox Communists. He immediately surrounded himself with a bevy of former Gorbachev advisers, notably Academician Leonid Abalkin, who had served Gorbachev as deputy prime minister for economic reform. Another adviser was Sergei Glazyev, Yeltsin's former minister of foreign trade who had broken with him over the 1993 crisis and the tight-money line of the second period. A further appointment unsettling to the world of conventional finance was Viktor Gerashchenko's return to the central bank to implement the easy-money, currency-emission promises that Primakov had inherited from Chernomyrdin. These were the people who, it was hoped, would steer Russia back to the balance between the state and the market that Chernomyrdin had already outlined.

Maslyukov's appointment did not sit well with the major party leaders. Zyuganov disliked him for his independence, and refused to send any more Communists into the cabinet. The liberal Yavlinsky was put out because he was only offered the post of "second" first deputy prime minister. The leader of Chernomyrdin's parliamentary group, Alexander Shokhin, initially agreed to be deputy prime minister for finance, but quit because he couldn't work with the other old faces. Primakov ended with a largely undistinguished cabinet of deputy ministers promoted to fill unclaimed vacancies, while the West professed grave unhappiness: Clinton's ambassador-at-large to the Commonwealth of Independent States told a congressional committee (September 15), "Prime Minister Primakov's . . . 'Do-it-Russia's-way' prescription can be a way of coping, of building political support for difficult reforms, or it can be a recipe for disaster. . . . The policies they propose—printing money; wage, price, and capital controls; and restoring state management of the economy—are likely to have disastrous results, above all for the Russian people." Nothing said about the disastrous results of the Yeltsin era. Instead, "In today's global economy, there is no real 'third way.'" Perhaps the speaker forgot that this was a formula coined by Lenin.

Besides the intractable facts that Primakov faces with Russia's economy, he is limited by the time frame in which he can operate. As old as Yeltsin and a declared noncandidate for the presidency himself, Primakov will at best lead a caretaker government until the elections of the year 2000. Paradoxically, it is better for him and for representative government in Russia that an enfeebled Yeltsin continue in office until that time, letting Primakov manage the country's crisis, and avoiding the added chaos of an early-term presidential contest that would be brought on if Yeltsin should die or resign prematurely.

HAS RUSSIA been going through a new revolution? That would be an exaggeration, even going back to the collapse of Communist rule in 1991. What Russia is experiencing is the tail end of a long revolutionary process that has been going on from one stage to the next ever since 1917, with the final repudiation of the Stalinist postrevolutionary dictatorship in a kind of return to the democratic and socialist aspirations of the initial revolutionary year. The post-Stalinist era has still not been an easy time, with its oscillations between the left and right variants of the early revolutionary ideal represented by Gorbachev and Yeltsin respectively. Gor-

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bachev's perestroika, based on "socialism with a human face" and a mixed economy, reflected the aspirations of most mass parties in 1917, whereas Yeltsin's reference points were the semiconstitutional czarism of 1905–1917 and the laissez-faire utopianism of Western theory. Now, under Primakov's aegis, Russia is headed gingerly back to the left, not toward Stalinist barracks socialism but toward some sort of New Deal or social-democratic model. Whether this will work for Russia, or whether it will break down in a new cycle of revolutionary violence as happened in mid-nineteenth-century France, is a question that still hangs over this tragically troubled country. ●

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India: of Men, Women, and Bombs

Amrita Basu and Rekha Basu

INDIA DECLARED its manhood last spring by blasting five nuclear devices. "It had to be done," said the outspoken Hindu nationalist leader Balasaheb Thackeray, "we had to prove that we are not eunuchs." Picking up on the sexual subtext, a cartoon in a leading Indian newspaper depicted Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee propping up his coalition government with a nuclear bomb. "Made with Viagra," the caption read.

Indian nuclear scientists and policy makers form an all-male club. Women surely have nothing to gain from the politics of national chauvinism that the explosions reflected, or from the economic sanctions and regional tensions that predictably followed. In large part because of the crash program of nuclear armaments, India's military budget for 1998–1999 soared by 14 percent to $10 billion, twice the amount it spends on education, health, and social services. Meanwhile, the female literacy rate is 36 percent, women earn 26 percent of men's earnings, and there are 927 women for every one thousand men in the population. Thus it would seem likely that women would rally round an antinuclear movement. Although some women do, a small but vocal minority—members of the ruling party—see the bomb as a potent sign of India's newfound strength. The bomb serves as a reminder that it is impossible to identify women with any one set of political beliefs, be it violence or pacifism, religiosity or secularism, nationalism or internationalism.

By exploding nuclear bombs, Hindu nationalists were seeking to explode the image of India as nonviolent (read effeminate or impotent) and of nonviolence as a form of strength. Paradoxically, they christened the bomb "Shakti" after the goddess of female energy. The show of nuclear—and sexual—prowess must also be placed in the context of the fragile political base on which India's new ruling coalition rests. Nuclear bombs can be a means of boosting flagging political fortunes and commanding the world's attention. The tragedy is that nuclear bombs are not merely symbols, they are a frighteningly destructive force. And India's nuclear tests immediately promoted a spiral of macho display that could bring disastrous consequences to the entire world. How has this come to pass?

Masculinity, Femininity, and Nationalism

The Hindu nationalist government exploded nuclear bombs in part to shatter stereotypes about the "effeminate" Indian that date back to the period of British colonialism. The British particularly disparaged Hindu male elites, whom they described as members of the "nonmartial" races. By contrast, they identified some communities, including Muslims, as members of the "martial" races and characterized them as robust and brave. Not surprisingly, the "martial races" were loyal to the British empire; the "nonmartial"

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races tended to be nationalists.

It was against this background that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi assumed leadership of the nationalist movement and challenged the association between strength, violence, and manliness. It was the British who were unmanly, Gandhi argued, for exercising power so irresponsibly. Gandhi rejected all the facets of modernity associated with colonial rule: the state, modern science, and heavy industrialization. He strenuously opposed committing resources to defense. He rejected the notion that male elites were India's natural rulers and asserted that India's strength was to be found in the masses, traditionally excluded from political life. Although Gandhi by no means sought to eradicate all social inequalities, he extended the nationalist movement from the cities to the villages, from elites to the poor, from Hindus to Muslims, and from men to women.

Hindu nationalists hated Gandhi's inclusiveness and believed that as the majority community, Hindus should dominate. Accepting colonial categories, they too regarded Muslims as militant, intolerant, and violent, and feared that Gandhi's "effeminacy" would bring about the further emasculation of Hindu men. A Hindu nationalist assassinated Gandhi in 1948. Fifty years later, his successors used the bomb to deal the final blow to Gandhi's vision.

Women's Violence

A relatively insignificant player for most of India's political life, the (Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) capitalized on the growing weakness of the Congress Party, which ruled India for most of the years since independence. Key to its political fortunes was a mass movement pitting India's Hindu majority against its Muslim minority. The BJP and its affiliates launched a campaign that culminated in the destruction of an ancient Muslim mosque in 1992—in order to construct a temple to the Hindu deity Ram. More than two thousand lives were lost. It was the first test of the BJP's ability to organize a movement that was founded on the display of macho violence.

Far from emerging as peacemakers, Hindu women were often at the forefront of the Hindu nationalist campaign, particularly in its most militant phase. On various occasions, two female nationalist leaders, Sadvi Rithambara and Uma Bharati, publicly incited Hindu men into violence against Muslims. On December 6, 1992, they openly goaded the crowds in Ayodhya to destroy the mosque. Their speeches were so incendiary that the government banned the sale of their cassettes. The motherland was being raped by lascivious Muslim men, they ranted; Hindu men, who had been emasculated by Muslim aggression, could only regain their manhood by destroying the mosque.

Consider the ironies. These women were not protesting the victimization of women, as Indian feminists had been doing. They were opposing the supposed victimization of Hindu men. And they were encouraging Hindu men to demonstrate greater virility! But while these women gave the lie to Gandhi's idealization of women as the embodiment of nonviolence, they accepted certain aspects of his unorthodox interpretation of Hinduism. Gandhi found in Hinduism inspiration for both renunciation and direct action. So he engaged in mass-based civil disobedience to protest British rule and lived an ascetic lifestyle.

Both these themes have particular significance for Hindu women. Women who take religious vows are freed from the familial responsibilities that usually keep them at home and curtail their political activism. Female ascetics have much more freedom than married women to travel, interact with men, and live apart from their families.

Furthermore, it may be liberating for women, who are continually enjoined to be decorous, to be praised for their good citizenship when they deliver angry, public speeches in which they abuse Hindu men for their supposed passivity. Rithambara and Bharati describe prominent Indian politicians as "eunuchs," "buffalos," "drunkards," and "fools," most unladylike language. The Ayodhya movement enabled these women to pursue their own ambitions for notoriety and power.

However, the BJP's support for such powerful, militant women was short-lived. As it drew closer to power and to forming a national government, it needed a more moderate veneer. It was time to channel its militancy in a different direction. It was time to send women back to their homes.

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Most analysts have often focused on India's relationship with China and Pakistan in explaining its decision to go nuclear. But there are several other significant explanations, and gender is central to them all.

Since its election campaign began, the BJP has been beleaguered by women. Sonia Gandhi (widow of the late prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, whose mother, Indira, and grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, were both prime ministers) emerged from the political wilderness to lead the Congress campaign. In a land that has been ruled for much of its modern history by the Gandhi family, Sonia's credentials were hard to beat. A key theme in Sonia's campaign was that the BJP's Hindu-nationalist orientation threatened minority rights and political stability, the core values of her family's legacy.

The BJP responded by attacking Sonia's Italian background and asked why Indians would subject themselves to foreign rule once again. Sonia cleverly deflected the charge by playing up her role as devoted daughter-in-law, whose identity ceased to be defined by her parents after her marriage. That made it a little harder for the BJP to keep harping on Sonia's being foreign. Nor has Sonia disappeared from the political scene. Although she initially refrained from criticizing the nuclear tests, she later lashed out at the BJP for mistaking restraint for weakness, thereby evoking memories of Mohandas Gandhi's nonviolent philosophy.

The BJP's other troubles with women developed within its own coalition. Although it won more seats in Parliament than any other political party in the 1998 elections, it didn't win the absolute majority it needed in order to form a government. Two of the fourteen parties in its coalition are headed by powerful women—Mamata Bannerjee and Jayalalitha Jayaram—who realized how much the BJP needed their support and made it costly.

Once a popular movie star, Jayaram had gone on to become a major politician in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Over the years she had become notoriously corrupt and was now caught up in a number of court cases for looting the state coffers. Before and after joining the coalition, she put intense pressure on the BJP to drop the charges against her. Otherwise, she warned, she would withdraw her support and the government would collapse. In the days preceding the nuclear explosion, the BJP seemed overwhelmed by its domestic woes. "Fatigued," "indecisive," and "tired" were how a government minister described the prime minister. An editorial writer for *India Today*, one of India's major news magazines, wrote that if the prime minister did not engage in nuclear testing, he might just as well "roll out the red carpet for Sonia Gandhi." His article was titled "Why Pussy Cats Can't Exercise the Nuclear Option." With the explosion of the bomb, Prime Minister Vajpayee asserted his strength and silenced Bannerjee and Jayaram.

The nuclear issue also provided the BJP with an ideal way to reincarnate Hindu nationalism as Indian nationalism. Its commitment to Hindu nationalism had been vital to the party's growth, and the BJP was unwilling to relinquish it. But as a party in power it couldn't afford to be as blatantly anti-Muslim as it had once been. In persuading thirteen parties to ally with it, the BJP was forced to relinquish many of its partisan commitments, such as the construction of a temple in Ayodhya. The BJP's revamped Hindu nationalism had to be capacious enough to include Indian Muslims while directing its anti-Muslim hostility towards predominantly Muslim Pakistan.

The BJP's attempts at inclusiveness are evident around the issue of the bomb. The scientist who played a leading role in developing the bomb, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, is Muslim—a secular Muslim, the BJP will point out, as if most Muslims are fundamentalists. Kalam takes particular pride in the fact that he and other scientists who produced the bomb have had no Western training. Although it includes a few Indian Muslims, the BJP has expressed extreme aggression toward predominantly Muslim Pakistan.

There are religious dimensions to the BJP's revamped Hindu nationalism and they recall its campaign in Ayodhya. If the Hindu deity Ram deserved a temple in his honor, the bomb deserves one, too. If the land around Ayodhya had a sacred significance, so too do the sands of Pokharan, where the nuclear device was exploded. The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP,

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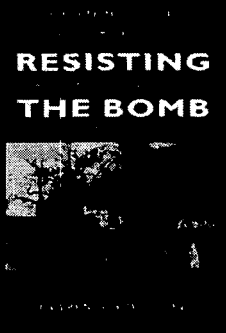
World Hindu Organization), which is affiliated with the BJP, announced that it would construct a temple called Shakti Peeth near the site of the explosion. The VHP general secretary, Govind Acharya, stated that Pokharan was "an ideal place for the Shakti Peeth"; this is where a Hindu social reformer is worshipped "for the reforms he brought about in society, especially for waging a movement for the protection of women."

It might seem surprising that Hindu nationalists would accord the bomb a female identity when the bomb is a masculine symbol. But Hinduism considers women powerful and potentially dangerous when their energy is unleashed. In India, as in many other parts of the world, nationalists have also seen women as symbols of the indigenous and the traditional. Acharya's comment that the temple would honor the protection of women might read more broadly as Hindu nationalists' attempt to protect an India that is both traditional and also modern.

Women's Nonviolence

Public opinion polls conducted just after the explosions showed that 91 percent of adults in six cities in India supported nuclear testing. However, the poll results should be put in perspective. The urban population, which is most exposed to both Western and Hindu nationalist influences, is most apt to value this form of patriotic assertion. The large majority of India's population, which lives in the rural areas, probably does not. But even the enthusiasm of those who celebrated India's nuclear bomb was tempered by Pakistan's testing and the prospect of a nuclear arms race on the subcontinent.

The fiftieth anniversary (in 1997) of the creation of India and Pakistan provided an opportunity for sober reflection about the consequences of the partition. More than a million people died and millions more lost their homes and were separated from their families. Recently, some women scholars have reconstructed these tragic years from the perspec-



Resisting the Bomb:

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Lawrence S Wittner

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tive of women on both sides of the border. Their research points to the callous disregard that both governments demonstrated for women and their children. It points to the need for the rebuilding of civilian ties independently of government actions.

The 1990s have witnessed unprecedented civilian initiative to improve Indo-Pakistani relations. One of the most important is the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy. Its work and commitment have intensified since the nuclear explosions. In India a new organization called the Movement in India for Nuclear Disarmament came into being within days of the explosions to coordinate demonstrations in the major cities.

The Indian women's movement has also thrown itself into antinuclear activities. The Indian Association of Women's Studies passed a resolution at its annual meeting last June condemning the nuclear tests and calling on the Indian and Pakistani governments to halt the further development of nuclear weaponry. Women's groups have sponsored numerous demonstrations against India's nuclear program. Indeed, the efforts of citizen groups in both India and Pakistan played a major role in the decision of both governments to commit themselves in October 1998 to prohibiting future tests and the further deployment of nuclear weapons. India has traveled a long distance from the Gandhian nationalism that opposed violence, aggressive masculinity, and religious chauvinism. But the journey is not yet over. Battles over what constitutes strength, for nations and for women, will continue, with women on both sides of the divide. ●

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Post–Cold War Feminism in El Salvador

Forrest D. Colburn

IN MEXICO there is an expression, "The dog is master of the cat, the cat is master of the mouse, and the mouse is master of its tail." In El Salvador, Deysi Cheyne reports: "There is so much violence and such a pronounced hierarchy in the family. The father comes home drunk and beats his wife. She slaps her eldest son. He hits his younger brother. And the little boy kicks the dog." Cheyne is a former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of El Salvador (PSC). Now she is the director of the Institute for Research, Training, and Development of Women, a nongovernmental organization in El Salvador. She and her organization, known by its Spanish acronym, IMU, strive to improve the welfare of the women of El Salvador, a heroic undertaking but one that Cheyne finds more satisfying and productive than any other. This commitment stems in part from her identification with the plight of women, but also from her disillusionment with party politics and the workings of El Salvador's incipient democracy.

Cheyne is doing good work, but her attitude toward politics illustrates how many "on the left" in Latin America have gone from an all-consuming passion for seizing the state to a virtual abandonment of interest in government. Party politics, electoral politics, and the slow labor of democratic governance and democratic opposition are too frequently dismissed—as if there is no middle ground between creating a Leninist state and retreating to the barrio.

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Cheyne grew up in the provincial city of La Libertad. As a college student at the University of El Salvador she was, as she says, "recruited" by the PSC. A scholarship enabled her to study biology at the V.I. Lenin State University in what was then Moldavia, in the former Soviet Union. Her studies were complemented by training in "intelligence gathering and analysis."

After four years in Moldavia, from 1976 to 1980, Cheyne returned to El Salvador, where she participated in clandestine activities of the PSC, one of the oldest Communist parties in Latin America. The triumph of the Sandinistas in neighboring Nicaragua gave the left in El Salvador hope for a similar revolution. But repression by the armed forces and the police was savage. It was a most dangerous period. In 1983, Cheyne was sent to Nicaragua, where she did intelligence work for the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), which the Communist Party had joined in 1980, though it maintained an independent party structure. Cheyne describes her work in Nicaragua, where she stayed for six years, as mundane, preparing intelligence reports for the "general staff" of the FMLN.

Ten days before the "final offensive" of 1989, Cheyne returned to El Salvador, traveling on a false passport. Crossing the border between Honduras and El Salvador was dangerous: discovery of her true identity would probably mean immediate death. The final offensive in San Salvador was ghastly, with many of her colleagues killed, mostly at close quarters. The offensive was not successful, though it may well have convinced the army that it was far from winning the war and so contributed to a negotiated peace. That settlement did not come until 1992; in the intervening period Cheyne lived in constant danger.

In 1992, she assumed the responsibility for leadership of the IMU, founded in 1986 by colleagues in the FMLN to raise the political awareness of women, to help in their daily struggles, and to marshal their support for the insurrection. The woman who contributed the most to the founding, Norma Guirola, was captured and killed during the final offensive. However, the IMU, surely suspect to the authorities, survived and continued its work.

At the close of the war, Cheyne was a member of the PSC Central Committee, with an additional title, *Responsable* to the Secretariat for the Welfare of Women. The PSC jockeyed with other parties and groups to define a new identity for the FMLN, which moved from being a clandestine guerrilla organization to a political party, competing in elections alongside its former "enemies." But Cheyne has become disenchanted with party politics, and she remains suspicious of democracy itself. And she is still "anticapitalist." For her, "We have elections, we have democracy, but when I go out into the streets I see poverty. The economy is reported to be growing at a healthy rate of such-and-such, but when I go out into the streets I see more poverty. I don't see that democracy with its attendant economic system is improving the lives of poor people. It has made no difference to most people." Cheyne no longer believes revolution is a solution to El Salvador's problems, but she also is not convinced that voting for this party or that one will accomplish much. She believes it is necessary to work directly with the disenfranchised, to "help them help themselves."

In 1995, the different political parties that made up the FMLN dissolved their respective party structures to become "currents" or "tendencies" within a revamped FMLN. The aim was to strengthen the FMLN and to enhance its electoral possibilities. I sense that for Cheyne the attendant loss of party responsibilities was a relief, allowing her to spend more time with the IMU and its "grass-roots" work.

The mission statement of IMU is: "Raise awareness in El Salvador of the discrimination and subordination of women, promote measures which enhance the status of women, strengthen the organization of women, and encourage the political and social participation of women at both the community and national level." A poster produced by the IMU is more specific. It states:

> **Platform of the Women of El Salvador**
> Fifty-Two Percent of the Population Demand:
> A halt to incest, rape, and sexual molestation.
> Land, credit, and technical assistance for women.

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Decent housing, with ownership, for women.
Job training, employment, and equal salaries.
A halt to increases in the cost of basic foodstuffs.
Equality of opportunity for girls in schools.
Comprehensive health care for women in more and better hospitals.
Comprehensive sexual education and sexuality without prejudices.
Free and voluntary maternity.
Responsible paternity.
Respect for the environment and a better quality of life for women.
Social policies that meet the needs of women.
Non-discriminatory laws.
Fifty percent of the positions of power for women.

Prodding El Salvador to meet these demands is a Herculean challenge.

Research conducted by the IMU staff shows that the average number of years in school for women in El Salvador is only three. Men are also poorly educated, but their average number of years in school is four. Only 2.7 percent of men study in a university, but for women the figure is a mere 0.7 percent. There is only one public maternity hospital in the country. Despite high rates of breast and uterine cancer, there is no effort by public health authorities to detect cases early so that treatment is possible. Economically, too, women suffer from discrimination, receiving, on average, salaries roughly 30 percent less than men for the same work. Only 12 percent of the titles awarded in the recent agrarian reform were given to women. Despite active political participation throughout the history of El Salvador, women have been kept out of positions of authority. Presidents and cabinet members are almost always men. In Congress only 10 percent of the representatives are women. The judicial system, too, lacks women in ranking positions.

But it is violence against women that is most alarming. A recent survey suggested that 57 percent of women have been physically abused in their homes by their spouses. Another study concluded that 51 percent of working women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. It is estimated that only 5 percent of rapes in the country are reported, a sign of the acceptance of violence against women. The consequences of this violence are enormous, contributing to low self-esteem, depression, emotional insecurity, and constant fear.

The division of labor within the family follows a similar pattern. Research sponsored by the IMU on women living in rural areas reveals that they commonly work outside the home yet shoulder nearly all household and child-rearing chores; rural women routinely labor fourteen to eighteen hours a day. Surveys of women residing in San Salvador, now home to one-fourth the population of El Salvador, reveal that in 95 percent of families women prepare all the meals, in 90 percent of families they wash all the clothes, in 84 percent of families women take sole responsibility for the medical care of children. One of IMU's publications has a drawing of a woman doubled over from carrying a boulder labeled "patriarchy." On top of the boulder sits a man sipping a cup of coffee.

The IMU sponsors a variety of projects: the construction of a nutrition center in an isolated village, efforts to assist women and their families by halting environmental degradation in vulnerable communities, campaigns against degrading portrayals of women in advertising campaigns, and so on. Most common, though, are diverse but persistent attempts to raise the awareness of women about their rights and to teach them to organize so that they can make claims on state and society for the fulfillment of these rights. Funding for the general activities of the IMU comes overwhelmingly from foreign assistance, especially from the Netherlands and Sweden.

At times, Cheyne's work takes her into the precincts of the state, and I sense that here she is less comfortable, or perhaps just suspicious. For example, in 1996 El Salvador's Congress passed a law creating a new institute, supported by the government: the Salvadoran Institute for the Progress of Women (ISDEMU). The institute was given the task of "formulating, implementing, and ensuring the fulfillment of national policies toward women." The board of directors includes four representatives of nongovernmental organizations, including the IMU, dedicated to pro-

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moting the welfare of women. Other directors are six ministers of state: justice, education, labor, health and social welfare, agriculture, and public safety. The president chooses the board's leader. President Armando Calderón Sol appointed his wife, Elizabeth de Calderón Sol. She is unmistakably from the bourgeoisie, and thus represents the social class that Cheyne had risked her life to overthrow. But Elizabeth de Calderón Sol has shown a commitment to the welfare of women. She is intelligent and, in the end, she is a woman too, and undeniably aware of what women of all classes in El Salvador endure. Cheyne decided to give her—and the new state institute—the benefit of the doubt and to see if together they could push ahead the collective interests of Salvadoran women. Still, she is determined to avoid state-centered politics.

WHAT CHEYNE and her staff of thirty are doing seems eminently useful. But how reasonable is it to skip the state? Even in the neoliberal era of "lean government," the state still has vast resources—including authority. Why ignore the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and even the police? Couldn't more be accomplished if, through democratic politics, these institutions are made more efficient, more responsive? Ministries are elephantine and lumbering, but it is unlikely that their responsibilities are going to be met by small, nongovernmental organizations dependent on foreign assistance. Without active participation in democratic politics, the Salvaldoran state will never respond to the needs of the poor majority, and especially not to women.

There is vigorous competition in El Salvador's elections. But voter absenteeism has been increasing. In the 1989 elections, 39 percent of those eligible to vote didn't. In 1994, the number rose to 54 percent. (Indeed, in all five Central American countries voter absenteeism is up.) Most of those who do not vote or participate in party politics are—predictably—poor and ill-educated. But many citizens who are economically comfortable also decline to participate in even the routine activities of the region's incipient democracies. I believe Cheyne will always vote. Still, her dislike of party and electoral politics is symptomatic of many of those once committed to radical change.

In pursuing her work, Cheyne is calm and soft-spoken, not betraying the drive that led her to ascend the ranks of the Communist Party of El Salvador, the fear she lived with throughout El Salvador's civil war, or the misery and death she has seen. But when I asked her if the past all seems like a dream, she says, "no." Cheyne is surprised though—and perhaps sometimes even overwhelmed—by how much the parameters of politics have changed in El Salvador, and she feels that "It is so much harder now that there is no model [the Soviet Union] to serve as a guide and a vision."

Others in Latin America, who like Cheyne aspire to see a better world, have also elected to sidestep what used to be their all-consuming passion—state power—and to focus, instead, on issues like environmental degradation, local governance, health care, education, and gender. Control of the state is not the only means to social change. One can work more directly, strengthening abilities for self-governance, reshaping cultural practices. The demise of Marxism in Latin America has left an ideological hole into which many have just disappeared, but it has also allowed for a more encompassing political agenda and permitted a more eclectic array of strategies.

The state remains, though. It has considerable responsibility and considerable (if inadequate) resources. And today in El Salvador the state is a democracy, fragile and incomplete, but a democracy nonetheless. Still, there is no democracy without democrats. Those whose commitment to social welfare previously led them to seek revolution now need, like everyone else, to participate en masse in democratic politics. ●

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Ethiopia's Ethnic Cleansing

Craig Calhoun

For five months, the Ethiopian government has been tracking down citizens of Eritrean descent and expelling them by the thousands. This is a peaceful and mild version of ethnic cleansing, so far without the mass murder and rape characteristic of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. It comes in the wake of fighting along the border between the two countries in May and June, and so is fueled by wartime anxieties. But it is nonetheless an effort to purge the population of a country on criteria of ethnicity alone. As such it should disturb the international community much more than it has so far.

Ethiopia is one of the world's most ethnically heterogeneous societies. Throughout the twentieth century, its leaders have been engaged in projects of trying to forge national unity among the peoples brought together by centuries of empire building. Perhaps the greatest progress in this direction was made by reformers under Emperor Haile Selassie, especially in the decades just after World War II. Agendas of national development, however, also fueled the communist revolution that toppled the emperor in 1973. The ensuing government of Haile Mariam Menghistu was extraordinarily ruthless and violent, but nonetheless committed to national unity. It drained the country's resources (and considerable Soviet aid) to fight against the Eritrean liberation fronts, ultimately falling from power as Eritrea won its war for independence. The new government was formed by members of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), speakers of Tigrinya like highland Eritreans, alongside whom they had fought against Menghistu. In fact, though the Amhara had dominated through most of Ethiopia's long imperial history, the primary alternative contenders for dynastic power had been Tigrayans and highland Eritreans. Ethiopia's largest ethnic or national group, the Oromo, had been kept subordinate in most of this history, as had numerous others.

One of Menghistu's policies had been to move large numbers of people from one province to another. This was presented partly as a response to drought and agricultural crisis; it was also a tactic to undercut regional ethnic consciousness. In this and other ways, recent Ethiopian history presents all too many opportunities for analogies with Yugoslavia. A similar process of disintegration is thus a real worry. Eritrean independence seems to have been a critical factor in destablizing the rest of Ethiopia, and whether and with what levels of violence it can be held together are now crucial questions.

The Ethiopian government's decision to expel citizens based on their racial or ethnic identities needs to be considered in this light. Like the rest of the war of which it is a part, it cannot be understood simply in terms of international factors or the ostensible instrumental goals it might accomplish; it is a drama played before a complex array of domestic audiences.

In this case, the most important such audience may be extremists within the Tigray movement itself. The government in Addis Ababa represents one wing of the old TPLF, that which chose to pursue power within Ethiopia rather than pursuing national independence for a "greater Tigray" (possibly including part of Eritrea). President Meles Zenawi, the leader of this faction, formed the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to pursue this agenda. Meles never achieved complete domination over Tigrayan politics, however, and has contended with resurgent ethnic consciousness among

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Oromo and other long-subordinated peoples and resentment from Amharas used to positions of power and privilege as well as from rivals within the Tigray camp. He did not send these rivals on diplomatic or administrative missions elsewhere, but instead allowed them to return to Tigray, where they regrouped and placed more and more pressure on him.

Meles, whose mother is of Eritrean descent, initially went out of his way to maintain friendly relations with Eritrea. This was partly because he recognized the economic interdependence of the countries, partly because Eritrea supported his government (and indeed, Ethiopians of Eritrean descent voted overwhelmingly for it and were encouraged to maintain Ethiopian citizenship and not emigrate in part because of this). This opened him to attack from both Ethiopian nationalists and Tigrayan extremists. Starting in late 1997, possibly in response to pressure from Tigrayan hard-liners, Meles reduced his communications with his Eritrean counterpart, Issayas Afwerki, and began to sanction a more belligerent posture toward Eritrea. Since war broke out, his speeches have become increasingly hostile.

THE WAR in May and June focused mainly on the Badme region. This is an area on the border between Tigray and Eritrea that has long been in dispute. Tigrayan and Eritrean guerrilla fronts interrupted their alliance against Menghistu to fight there in 1984–85. The region is ethnically mixed, and during the war that ended in 1991, the TPLF and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) each ended up in control of some territory inhabited mainly by members of the other group. Ironically, in fact, the current fighting is close to Adua, where in 1896 Ethiopia dealt Italy the most important defeat of any European invader in all of Africa. The Battle of Adua left Ethiopia independent and forced Italy to withdraw behind the very Eritrean border now subject to dispute.

At independence, Eritrea claimed the region up to the border drawn by Italy and recognized by imperial Ethiopia. This was also the provincial border between the provinces of Tigray and Eritrea when both were ruled from Addis Ababa. However, there were areas within the Eritrean border that Ethiopia continued to administer. Because of the close friendship between the two governments, however, there seemed no rush to delineate the responsibilities. A bilateral commission was established to determine arrangements in the Badme as well as other areas. It met even up to the first conflict in May. Ethiopia had begun to consolidate control in the disputed region, and Eritrean farmers, who had long complained about their treatment by the Tigrayans, began to be forced out. The hand of the Ethiopian national government seems to have been forced by local advocates of a "Greater Tigray." Even as the bilateral commission was supposedly working on a resolution to the dispute, the local forces were taking their own actions. Ethiopia also issued new maps changing the border between the two countries, and enshrined these on its new currency. In May 1998, Ethiopian forces killed three senior Eritrean army officers sent to negotiate, apparently because they refused to disarm at the border claimed by Ethiopia. Eritrea then took Badme by military force, and on multiple fronts quickly routed the Ethiopian army, ending up in control of a sizable swath of Ethiopian territory. This strong military response gave up the last clear chance to avoid war. Ethiopia launched air strikes against the Eritrean capital of Asmara. Eritrea responded with a strike against the Tigrayan city of Mekelle, where its bombs hit a school full of children, and defeated Ethiopia's army to take Zalembessa, inside Ethiopia.

Phone calls from President Clinton were apparently instrumental in getting Ethiopia and Eritrea to agree to end their air war. Otherwise, however, U.S. diplomatic interventions were largely incompetent and counterproductive, led by an inexperienced political appointee instead of an experienced diplomat. International mediators have failed largely because they have called for a return to the *status quo ante bellum* defined in Ethiopia's favor as that which existed on May 5, rather than taking into account the colonial boundary that the Eritreans believe should define the border.

New economic grievances reinforce old ethnic resentments and boundary disputes.

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Eritrean independence had left Ethiopia landlocked and reliant on Eritrean ports. In 1997, Eritrea infuriated Ethiopia by introducing a new currency, changing the local terms of trade. The Ethiopian government then began to divert its shipping to Djibouti. Before the war, however, both countries were enjoying substantial economic growth.

Just as a grudging peace returned, the expulsions started. Local government authorities in Ethiopia were charged with identifying the Eritreans in their jurisdictions. Not only Eritrean nationals, but lifelong Ethiopian citizens with just one Eritrean parent were expelled, their bank accounts frozen, assets seized. One motivating factor may have been Eritrea's embarrassingly quick defeat of the Ethiopian army. The expulsions may also be in part an attempt to focus discontent on apparent external enemies rather than on either economic crisis or the distribution of power and resources domestically. Investment within Ethiopia has flowed heavily toward Tigray.

When the expulsions increased in early July, UN Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson issued a condemnation. On July 9, President Meles lashed out at her report, asserting that as a sovereign state Ethiopia could deport anyone it chose for any reason, including "if we don't like the color of their eyes." Overshadowed by the World Cup and upheaval in Nigeria, the start of a new African refugee crisis attracted little attention.

On July 19, President Meles said those being deported were spies, many armed. International observers scoff at this, and my own interviews with those expelled confirm their doubts. One was a sixty-four-year-old woman who had lived her entire life in Ethiopia, working as a cleaner in a school. She was linked to Eritrea only by the ethnicity of her father, who had died thirty years ago. The deportees are disproportionately old and retired. Several are disabled veterans of the Ethiopian army. They include school teachers, mechanics, shop owners, Catholic priests, and doctors. Some say neighbors with local grudges reported them as Eritreans; others say their neighbors wept when the police took them away. Businesspeople suspect that Ethiopians want to take over their companies.

One group of 102 deportees was sheltered in a school building in Mendefera when I arrived there in mid-July. They came from towns throughout the central and northern regions of Ethiopia. Nearly all were Ethiopian citizens; many had been born in Ethiopia. Dozens had never visited Eritrea and spoke no Eritrean language. The Ethiopian authorities picked them up at work, at home, at the market, and at the post office. At least two were taken from hospitals where they were undergoing treatment. Some were held for days; others were immediately put on buses. When they reached the Mereb River, north of Adua, they were released and told to walk across the border. Rain was a blessing; the temperature was over 110° Fahrenheit when the previous 453 refugees arrived in Assab.

The newcomers ranged from three-and-a-half to eighty-one years old. Some were unable to walk and had to be carried by others. "We should have seen it coming," said the longtime manager of a sugar factory, "but we just couldn't believe it." One retired UN official showed me his official papers. His last posting had been to war-torn Somalia. "I go from trouble to trouble," he said. "But how can this happen in my home?" A well-dressed businessman said he had his passport ready, with visas for Germany and the United States, but the police simply took it. A forty-seven-year-old woman with a bandaged foot repeated, "I am rich; I have businesses; this should not happen to me." A poor woman cried as she told of children left behind.

A striking dimension of Ethiopian policy is the separation of parents and children. A UN survey reports that 90 percent of refugees left children behind, of whom 15 percent had no one to care for them. A lawyer of half-Eritrean parentage, whose wife was in Asmara working for the U.S. Agency for International Development, was forced to leave his four children, ages three to fifteen. One woman was even forced to leave behind her nursing seven-month-old baby—though since then Ethiopian authorities have declared that this was a mistake and that mother and infant may be reunited. At the same time, I met children as young as twelve who had been expelled alone.

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Expulsion itself generally means a bus trip of several days to a remote border area. Soldiers then deposit the victims in a no-man's-land between the armies that face each other over the border. In some cases this means that the refugees must walk several miles before finding anyone to take them in. Often, Ethiopian soldiers have fired weapons and created the semblance of military movement, perhaps hoping that their Eritrean opponents would fire on the refugees making their way across the border.

So far, Ethiopia has expelled only about 5 percent to 10 percent of its estimated half million citizens with significant Eritrean ancestry. About two thousand cross the border each week. Most report having been held in jails or camps for some time before being sent out of the country. It appears that many thousands of Ethiopians of Eritrean descent have been rounded up but not yet "processed" for expulsion. In addition to Ethiopian citizens of Eritrean descent, the Ethiopian government has imprisoned or expelled most Eritrean nationals who were living or working in Ethiopia. It has refused to allow these to leave by normal routes—that is, by simply taking a plane out of the country—but insisted instead on their forcible deportation. In addition, it has detained Eritrean students who were studying at the University of Addis Ababa on an exchange program; one has died in custody.

DESPITE ECONOMIC crisis, the Eritrean government has welcomed the new arrivals and provided them with support. Many had feared, based on what they heard in Ethiopia, that Eritrea was in the midst of famine (which it is not) and that the government was on the verge of collapse. In fact, Eritrean authorities are giving each a modest cash allowance (approximately $200 per family) and working with some international support to provide for their health, education, and other needs. In the long run, say leaders, these people will be assets to the country. In the short run, the biggest difficulty is simply to house them.

In Eritrea, the war has not had the effect of weakening the government or sowing disunity. On the contrary, Eritreans are impressively united behind their government and national consciousness has only grown. Even the half million or more Eritreans in the diaspora outside Africa, often critics of the government, have joined in support. This is expressed not just verbally, but in financial donations that have come close to making up for the shortfall in trade. On the other hand, crisis conditions have slowed implementation of Eritrea's new Constitution and progress toward democracy. More than 175,000 of Eritrea's 2.5 million citizens are now mobilized for military or other national service.

In Ethiopia, despite an early rallying around the government, the result of the war seems to be ever-greater divisions among ethnic groups. The Ethiopian Constitution of 1993 was an extraordinary experiment in multicultural democracy, providing for varying levels of autonomy and even rights of secession for the country's many ethnic groups (up to eighty-two by one count). Many fear that a collapse of the current government will bring chaos, and perhaps even break up the country. Violent ethnic division could be a calamity. ●

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Transnational Youth Activism

THERE HAS been much talk in Dissent's pages and elsewhere of the need to develop strong new transnational institutions of labor and civil society that could counterbalance the power of global corporations. But in the face of serious linguistic, cultural, and institutional barriers—and with so many well-intentioned people throwing up their hands in postideological exasperation—these new transnational formations rarely take shape in the real world.

One small ray of hope: this past October 30 young activists in twenty-five countries conducted an internationally coordinated day of action in defense of workers' rights. They held rallies in solidarity with the striking workers at the Han Young plant in Tijuana, Mexico; condemned Nike for its labor practices in Southeast Asia; and passed out leaflets in seven languages denouncing the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which would codify the Robert Rubin model of globalization.

This day of action was organized not by some glossy new transnational organization, but by two old and venerable groups: the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Socialist and social democratic youth organizations worked with trade unions to raise awareness about the threat to trade-union rights posed by multinational corporations and repressive governments. Among the day's demands were an increased commitment to cross-border organizing by unions and the recognition that living standards are tied together by the multinational club's race to the bottom.

IUSY's 132 member organizations, which range from community organizations to governmental bodies, have almost always been slightly to the left of their parent parties in the Socialist International. Until recently, IUSY has seen itself as a forum for discussion and largely abstained from internationally coordinated action. However, over the last few years, certain member organizations have been nudging it toward greater activism. This diverse list includes the Young Democratic Socialists (affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America), New Zealand's Young Labor, the Popular Socialists of Argentina, and many of the traditionally strong European organizations.

The question remains, though: could IUSY transform itself into an international activist network of the kind envisaged by critics of globalization? If it were to do so, we would be saved from having to reinvent the wheel. Imagine a huge, well-organized network of trained activists switching its emphasis from electioneering to anti-sweatshop work and global labor solidarity.

Of course, this would be quite a transformation. Although the admission of new members from Africa and the Americas has changed IUSY's focus tremendously, it is still heavily influenced by the traditional European social democratic core organizations. These powerful organizations hold different levels of commitment to IUSY's new course. To the extent that the European leadership of IUSY backs the new activism, and much of it does, we can only hope that it rubs off on the parent parties, who have yet to turn their electoral sweep of Western Europe into a coherent alternative to neoliberalism.

And that is perhaps the most hopeful part of the whole project—that future politicians are working side by side with the increasingly politicized and energized trade-union movement to develop a new, grassroots strategy for advancing social justice globally. The "Third Way" touted by some of the parent parties may prove to be short-lived. The left politics of the future has yet to be invented.

DARAKA LARIMORE-HALL

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Democracy Beyond the Nation-State

A Cosmopolitical Manifesto

Ulrich Beck

It was a little more than 150 years ago that the transition from the feudal order to the democratic nation-state was debated in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt during the German Revolution. Today we have to begin a debate on the transition from the nation-state to a transnational and cosmopolitan democracy. This transition will not happen on its own. If the idea of a transnational democracy is to achieve political shape and power, a new political subject will have to be brought into being: the transnational party of global citizens.

But how can transnational parties engage themselves in the so-called internal affairs of so-called other countries? This question applies most immediately to Europe. Imagine that the European Union (EU) itself applied for membership in the European Union. The response is obvious: it would be rejected. For the European Union does not meet the democratic requirements for membership. This story can be given a further twist: imagine that a few weeks after this rejection, all the member states of the EU are notified that the EU unfortunately has to cancel their membership. Why so? Because France, Germany, Britain, and all the others no longer live up to the membership requirements. As members, they don't deserve to be members: more and more decisions are taken autonomously by the Union, not democratically determined but merely executed by the member states.

This is a perfect example of the dilemma of democracy in the age of globalization. Although in the context of democratically constituted national politics, even the refusal to make decisions requires an appearance of legitimacy, far-reaching decisions that lack any sort of democratic legitimacy are commonly made in the apparently non-political transnational context.

Crucial questions are raised by Europe's experience with mad-cow disease and again by financial crises like those of Asia today: Who can set binding norms for nation-states while bypassing their political processes? And how can he/she/they legitimately do this? Or to put it another way: can there be some kind of transnational procedural legitimation?

Some political theorists answer yes, and they discuss a variety of models that would break up the spatial paradigm of parliamentary democracy in a transnational manner. How can this be done? Let us ask concretely: why has there never been a European referendum about introducing the Euro? This would have raised the level of Europe's politics by creating a European public to address a truly European theme.

Introducing the Euro and then sounding the retreat to the old nation-state, as many Europeans are doing now, jeopardizes the whole experiment. Turning back the clock to national democracy is sheer illusion. There will be no more democracy in Europe—unless it is a transnationally enhanced democracy. Especially after monetary union has been achieved, Europe must be strengthened with new political ideas and institutions. For only a strong Europe can spell out the old European idea of democracy for a new global era.

Imagine that it has become possible for British, Polish, or Italian citizens to engage themselves in a German election campaign, as members of a European party active in all European states. They would have a right to "meddle" in this way, because in German election campaigns today European and even glo-

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bal political issues are debated, albeit in a national disguise.

Ecological crises, migration and xenophobia, crime, financial flows, tax evasion, job flight, poverty and justice, the future of the welfare state, and retirement pensions—all these are global problems, and not only in the sense that they have grown too big for the national political frame. No, they are also global in the sense of being down-to-earth, everyday problems in this locality, in this city, for this group. There is a new dialectic of the global and the local that is not easy to accommodate in national politics. It can be adequately presented and resolved only in a transnational context.

For just that purpose the new political subject is necessary: cosmopolitan parties that represent transnational matters transnationally, but do so within the political arenas of nation-states. Therefore they can only exist, programmatically and organizationally, in a plural mode—as national, global movements, as parties for global citizens. They would compete with national parties in what are only apparently national conflicts about policy and power.

Cosmopolitan parties would be the first actors in party politics to copy the strategies of corporations and break out of the territorial trap of the nation-state; they would be active here as well as there; they would play nation-states one against the other. Try this well-tested party slogan: let's learn from the economy, let's learn to win!

The world does not want global offices and bureaucrats. But there are other ways to organize globally, and corporations show us how. They dismantle their old bureaucratic hierarchies and organize themselves instead as flexible networks. Coordination doesn't only operate top-down, but horizontally and across boundaries. States and parties can learn to build a network, a transnationally united, but decentralized order.

It is important to ask early and self-critically: who is going to decide which values come to be considered (sacred or secular) cosmopolitan values? There is a well-founded suspicion that cosmopolitanism will turn out to be some version of Western petit-bourgeois morality inflated to megalomania, unless strong national-global parties bring about a radical change in the core countries of the West: from societies that claim to teach everyone how to behave to societies capable of learning from others.

Is this cloud-cuckoo-land? The idea is as unrealistic as the demand for national democracy was in 1848. But its time has come. In recent years densely regulated industries have been deregulated: telecommunications, energy, food, and finance. Global competition has thereby been unleashed and has led to conflicts among national authorities struggling to establish a normative regime. With free trade in commodities, the problem has now become a global one, and this is only the beginning. New sources of conflict loom on the horizon: for example, efforts to establish global environmental or labor-market standards, where conflicts are even more difficult to handle because the issues are so sensitive politically.

The first wave of national deregulation requires a second wave of transnational regulation. This change will revalue what was devalued during the 1980s: the state and politics. What is needed is the exact opposite of neoliberal deconstruction: strong states that can enforce the transnational regulation of markets domestically and externally. The need to invent and negotiate the new rules makes globalization a focus of conflict not only in politics and the economy, but also in the daily lives of people around the world.

How can struggles for regulation be politically organized? Three scenarios are possible (they are not mutually exclusive):

1) cosmopolitan window-dressing: transnational politics as a way of pursuing national interests;

2) international regimes: strong regulatory authorities that act independently of national democratic governments; or

3) nationally anchored cosmopolitan parties, which would activate national publics, still largely cut off from one another, for transnational arguments.

Unless we experiment with such new forms of democracy—beyond the nation-state

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but still focused on the national parliaments that are the centers of democracy—we are likely to find ourselves in a postpolitical era of high technocracy. Cosmopolitan parties can be important and influential even if they are initially capable only of mobilizing relatively small numbers of men and women. For they will put all the other parties under pressure to address transnational issues in democratic ways.

Still, the difficulties are enormous. Differences between the United States and the European Union with regard to the quality and safety of food products, for example, can hardly be reconciled. These kinds of disagreements will increase, the greater the contrast of cultural backgrounds, wealth, and political regimes, across Africa, South America, and Asia. Cosmopolitan parties will not only have to endure and cope with these disagreements internally, they will also have to summon up the strength to resist movements for renationalization. In other words, they will have to fight for the autonomy of a cosmopolitan ethics and politics in their respective national cultural milieux.

They would be "cosmopolitan parties" in three different ways: first, their values and goals would be shaped with reference to humanist traditions common to all cultures and religions—in contrast to national parties that refer themselves only to national traditions and solidarities; second, they would put global questions squarely at the center of their political imagination, and their programs for action would aim always at a reform of national political systems so that they could address these questions; third and finally, they would be organized as multinational parties, cosmopolitan movements of French, North American, Polish, German, Japanese, Chinese, or South African origins, interconnected in the various niches of global society.

But who might be the supporters of such a cosmopolitan movement for the expansion of democracy? Where are the voters that cosmopolitan parties can address and represent? It is in the metropoles, the global cities, where a postnational understanding of politics, responsibility, the state, justice, arts, science, and public exchange might emerge—and where transnational parties might find support. To some extent this is already foreseeable. To what extent it will actually happen in the future is, however, an empirically and politically contingent question. Connection to the Internet does not by itself generate global citizens.

We must avoid any glorification of the multiethnic global society. It is less like a melting pot and more like a salad bowl in which cultural identities coexist with and against one another in a colorful and conflictual way. Alongside tolerance and the enjoyment of diversity grow exclusion and xenophobia. These reactions do not indicate a failure of the multicultural experiment; they only suggest that all of us, all modern nation-states, have finally entered the turbulence of global society.

The rank and file of global parties, the "global citizenry" in its various national colors, composed of multiple branches, should not be confused with a global managerial class. We will have to distinguish between global capitalists and global citizens. And yet one may say: the development of a pluralist world citizenry is paradoxically pushed forward by the tail winds of global capitalism. For in pursuit of his self-interest, the capitalist has already learned how to think and act in transnational contexts, while the citizen still thinks and acts in the categories of the nation-state.

The power of global parties is not only measured by what will be, obviously, their initially small membership and vote count. Their power resides rather in the legitimacy of their voice even when they speak only for a dwindling or persecuted minority. Imagine a meeting of global parties: this should be an Olympic Games of contrasting opinions and strong arguments that attracts the attention of global mass media and begins to shape a global public.

In the final instance the question of how cosmopolitan parties can be made possible and powerful will find an answer only in the political space where it properly belongs. It is an experiment, and it must find a practical answer. *Cosmopolitans of all countries, unite!* ●

Ulrich Beck is the author of *A Reinvention of Politics*. This essay originally appeared in *Die Zeit*, July 16, 1998. *Translated from the German by Silvia Baubock.*

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Who Needs Civil Society?

A Feminist Perspective

Anne Phillips

Distinctions between public and private have been central to feminist analysis. Distinctions between civil society and the state are far less frequently invoked. Does feminism need a concept of civil society? It certainly does not need what is presented in so much of the historical literature, where civil society figures as a place where women are not. Hegel saw man as having his "substantive life" in the state and civil society, while woman pursued her "substantive destiny" in the family, and this highly gendered understanding of civil society is by no means unique. "Civil" often implies a contrast with natural or familial. "Woman" still suggests an association with nature or family. It is hardly surprising that civil society so often conjures up a masculine realm.

Yet feminists did not stop talking about the state just because so few women exercised political power—if this were the policy, there would be all too many things on which feminists would have to remain silent. The deeper difficulty is that the problems that generate the category of civil society derive from a nonfeminist agenda, and that this remains true even if we leave Hegel behind to concentrate on more recent debates. What makes *civil society-state* a useful way of dividing up the contemporary world is usually some thesis about the coerciveness of state power or amoral fragmentation of market relations: the idea that democracy depends, for example, on a dense network of voluntary organizations, or that people need forms of association not regulated by either market or state. The key presumption underlying these two is that human relationships are ordered very differently in different parts of our lives: it is because of these differences that we need "more" civil society. Feminism, on the whole, has been less inclined to accept this division of spheres.

A feminist looks around the world and sees much the same patterns repeating themselves in every sphere of existence. Same old pattern of dominance, same old pattern of exclusion, same old problems whether in family, market, civil society, or state. Those who describe the family as a unit based on love, or the market as organizing people "behind their backs," or bureaucracy as the implementation of impartial rules, may well come to regard civil society as more "social" than any of these—less intense than the family, less anonymous than the market, particularly crucial to social cohesion. Those who have trouble with these descriptions are less likely to romanticize civil society or conceive of it as so very distinct from anything else.

The Attractions of Civil Society

One might then say that feminism does well enough without any conception of civil society, but this would be too abrupt. If we take civil society in its characteristically modern meaning—as a way of referring to the terrain of voluntary associations that exist between economy and state—there are two reasons why feminism should be attracted to the politics associated with this. The first is that a feminist perspective is radically pluralist, and that pluralism finds a more welcome home in the associations of civil society than in either family or state. The second is that some of the associations that spring up in civil society have a looseness, even an indeterminacy, that makes them particularly hospitable to feminist politics. Feminism is always in some sense about transformation: articulating previously unheard voices, exposing previously unchallenged biases, and rewriting political agendas. Because it is so often about bringing some-

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thing new into existence (not, that is, just pursuing long-established interests and claims), it can be said to have a particular affiliation with some of the less regimented of civil society's groups.

The background to both points is that it is difficult to state in advance what "women" need or want, and that this indeterminacy affects the kind of politics in which feminism thrives. Sexual difference runs deep in human identity and is not something we can temporarily suspend. We can decide not to reveal our religious or political beliefs; we may even be able to conceal our class and ethnic origins; but few of us can conceal whether we are women or men. This affects the way others view us. It also affects the way we view ourselves. Our sense of ourselves as women and men has been built up through so many circumstances and in so many layers that we can rarely separate out those aspects of our personality that are just "us" from those that express historical practice and cultural conventions. This is not to say people are doomed to repeat whatever they learned in an early socialization or that sexual identity is so pervasive/invasive that no one can hope to change it. But imagining a world without sexual hierarchy—and imagining what kind of people we might become in such a world—is an awesome task. One consequence of this is that feminism is by definition experimental—it implies listening to many different voices and exploring as yet untried possibilities. This requires a pluralist politics rather than one that seeks "the" solution from on high.

If there is to be a contest between civil society and the state—a sense in which societies can choose to have a bit more of one and a bit less of the other—feminism is then more likely to situate itself on the side of the first. (I shall qualify this in the next section, for nothing is ever so simple.) In a vibrant civil society, there will be as many organizations as there is energy to go around, and even if most of these continue to be dominated by men, the very multiplication of alternatives opens up opportunities for contesting dominant conventions and promoting radical change. Those on the margins of public life then have more scope for developing alternative scenarios and ideas. If all action takes place within the legislature, there is less chance for those most radically questioning the prevailing consensus to influence public agendas.

THE OTHER point about associations in civil society is that as voluntary associations they belong to nobody but their members. This means that even those with no particular pretensions toward democracy will be vulnerable to internal pressure. Churches, to take one unlikely example, are hierarchical associations, and not really amenable to equality legislation; yet as Jodi Dean notes in her discussion of civil society, there have been dramatic changes, including the ordination of women, in a number of these.[1] For associations that actively pride themselves on reflecting their members' views, there are even more opportunities for contesting sexism or male bias. A further, more practical point is that the many associations that are locally based—the housing cooperative, the association of black parents, the group formed to protect a historic local building—will be more accessible to women than the grander avenues that lead to state power.

In 1970s Britain, feminists often expressed a preference for the self-financing, self-regulating, community nursery over the local authority nursery subsidized by taxation. The former was usually housed in a makeshift accommodation and often depended on a fragile roster of volunteer workers, but because it was under the control of parents and workers, there was more scope for developing nonsexist ways of caring for children and engaging with parents' preferences and needs. This is only one of many instances where feminists have expressed reservations about centralized state power, talked of the risks of co-option and betrayal, and presented state institutions as actively patriarchal or peculiarly unresponsive to human need. There are disagreements about this, and many have thought that the anti-statism of the contemporary women's movement went too far. Nonetheless, a powerful strand of feminism views the self-governing, voluntary association as more accessible and contestable than the male-dominated, rule-bound state.

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Civil society matters, finally, because programs for radical change have to capture people's hearts and minds and cannot depend on directives issuing from the state. The battle for sexual equality has to be won in civil society, for there is a limit to what can be achieved through the "right" legislation alone. The point suggested earlier is that the state can be more conservative (more stuck in the old grooves) than the free flow of opinion and argument in civil society. But we know that the opposite also happens: that state policies can get ahead of opinion formation in civil society, and that when this gap becomes too great, some kind of backlash occurs. Recent examples include the attack on affirmative action in the United States, and the revival of white-Australia nationalism in a country where a pluralistic multiculturalism seemed to have become the accepted view. In both cases, one might say that politicians had become overly confident about what could be achieved by fiat alone. Feminists have, of course, been happy to seize any opportunities offered via equality legislation or affirmative action. But being more attuned than some other traditions to the power of culture in regulating social relations, they are also acutely aware that strategies for change have to intervene on a number of levels. This is not necessarily (indeed rarely) discussed under the rubric of civil society, but it does have the effect of directing feminism away from an exclusively state-centric politics and highlighting the role of nongovernmental associations.

None of this adds up to a thesis about civil society as the source of social cohesion or the guarantor of freedom or the place where morality resides. When feminists indicate a preference for a thriving network of "counterpublics," or say they want to see child care organized by a local self-governing collective, the value attached to civil society is still largely instrumental. It is not that civil society is being presented as a good in itself, but that there is more scope for identifying and exploring nonsexist, egalitarian ways of doing things when operating outside the heavy hand of state power; and that practices of sexual inequality are so insidious and pervasive that they cannot be tackled merely by initiatives from the top. This makes civil society important to feminist politics, but does not necessarily say anything about civil society as a value in itself.

Counterattractions

Against this there is the crucial problem with civil society: that it so often operates to keep women out. Think of the coffee-house society of eighteenth-century Europe, where men had their clubs and meeting places and discussion groups and women barely figured at all. Think of those London clubs that even today close their doors to women and pride themselves on providing a safe haven for the exclusive use of men. Overt exclusion has become relatively rare in the last years of the twentieth century, but there could certainly be a flourishing network of men's associations paralleled by a less flourishing network of women's associations. In the absence of overlapping membership, this looks more like segregation than "society."

The associations of civil society are brought into existence by the actions and choices of their members. This being so, they will inevitably reflect whatever is the existing distribution of resources (money, information, contacts, time) and probably reflect whatever is the existing balance of power. With the requisite energy and determination, people can of course do extraordinary things. But when so much of what generates an organization is gendered—time; self-confidence; range of contacts; to a lesser extent, range of skills—it is most likely that the number and membership of organizations will turn out to be gendered as well. There are certain features of modern democracy that can be said to counteract background inequalities. At its best, this is what the right to vote does: it makes differences of sex, class, or race temporarily irrelevant, and gives men and women a moment of equal power. Civil society is not open to regulation in the same kind of way. There is no body to oversee its activities, to check that each citizen joins an equal number of groups or that each is equally active; because of this, civil society is likely to reflect and confirm whatever is the current distribution of sexual power. Individual associations may be wonderfully vibrant—stretching boundaries, contesting orthodoxies, generating new forms of power—but those

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that speak for subordinate groups are still likely to be less numerous and weaker than the rest.

The related difficulty is that the relatively unregulated nature of civil associations can make them more prone to discriminatory behavior than the publicly scrutinized institutions of the state. I do not want to exaggerate this point, for I am continually struck by the lapses one finds in government departments and the failure to live up to standards one would have thought obligatory in the modern state. It is also important to recognize that voluntary associations are not entirely unregulated: they mostly come under the purview of national legislation and are required to operate in a reasonably honest and fair-minded way. There are still many invidious ways in which voluntary associations reproduce social hierarchies and social exclusions, and their very voluntariness can discourage measures designed to equalize the members' power. The more intimate the group, for example, the less willing it may be to put decisions to a vote; people may feel this makes things too formal, or sets people up as adversaries when they ought to be thinking of one another as colleagues and friends. Voluntary associations often operate on a borderline between friendship and politics, bringing together like-minded people who share similar views or enjoy the same intellectual and leisure pursuits. Feminists have been quick to spot the potential coerciveness in this, and the way it can work to disempower those who feel at odds with the dominant consensus but lack the confidence to expose themselves before people they regard as "sisters" or friends. In such circumstances, the associations of civil society can be more coercive and less protective of individual equalities and freedoms than the much-despised institutions of the state.

A THIRD RISK has less to do with civil society and more with the way the concept is invoked to support critiques of the welfare state. In some recent analyses, civil society figures as part of an argument against excessive state spending and in favor of self-help. Civil society then becomes a code name for people assuming responsibility for their own lives, and welfare spending is blamed for diminishing the role of voluntary associations through which people once assumed this responsibility. To illustrate with one example from Britain, David Green recently contrasted the friendly societies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which sprang up through traditions of self-help and insured workers against hard times, with the national insurance program later introduced by the government, which made insurance against sickness and unemployment compulsory and organized the payments via the state. In Green's view, this shifted the balance between civil society and state disastrously in favor of the latter, encouraging inefficiency (because there was then only one provider of insurance or health), and discouraging "the spirit of personal responsibility on which a vibrant civil society rests."[2] As is often the case, Green's argument is linked to the increase in one-parent families, and the rise of illegitimacy, divorce, and separation. The revival of civic traditions of self-help and responsibility is then connected in some obscure (to me) way with restoring marriage as a life-long commitment and getting the family back on its traditional tracks.

At this point in the argument, feminists usually become rather restive about the delights of civil society. Celebrations of an active citizenry or a vibrant civic culture have often signaled policy shifts that seek to move responsibility from state to community. All too often, this "community" turns out to mean women, who are expected in their capacity as wives, mothers, and daughters to take responsibility for more damaged members of their family, including those previously cared for in mental hospitals and not yet equipped for returning to "normal" life. This requisitioning of female labor may not be what most theorists have understood by civil society, but the term has undoubtedly come to carry this additional connotation. Where it does, it rings all the alarm bells. Despite the points developed earlier, many feminists have continued to look to the state as one of the sources of gender justice, believing (a) that publicly sanctioned principles of sexual equality will help protect women exposed to wage exploitation, domes-

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tic violence, or the cultural pressures of their community or group; and (b) that public provision for child care, health care, and age care is an intrinsic part of the "feminization" of policy and helps create a sexually egalitarian world. It is more often men than women who celebrate "a vibrant civil society" as the alternative to this.

Voluntary Associations and Public Support

One of the key ambiguities, then, is that feminism is simultaneously anti- and pro-state. It is critical of the state as an exclusive forum for political action; tends to see state institutions as hidebound, unresponsive, promoting a conservative political agenda; tends, for these reasons, to see the more amorphous, decentralized, and pluralistic activities of civil society as better suited to the development of feminist politics. But feminism is also supportive of the state as an agent of redistribution, regards the market as peculiarly unsuited to meeting the welfare needs that dominate so many women's lives, and considers the patchy network of voluntary associations a poor substitute for universal provision via the state.

Feminism is about equality, understood here as meaning that there is no significant difference between the sexes in their jobs, responsibilities, or roles. This implies equality in respect of employment; even more far-reaching and demanding, it implies equal responsibility for both sexes in caring for the young, sick, and old. Leaving aside as implausible the notion that this equality will arise spontaneously from the workings of the market, there are basically two different ways of conceiving this development. The first concentrates on the public provision of services that were previously carried out by women in the home: setting up publicly funded and subsidized nurseries, providing a network of publicly employed careworkers to cook meals and do the shopping for the elderly or disabled, providing high-quality full-time care in residential homes. Responsibilities that used to fall on the shoulders of mothers, wives, and daughters (but hardly ever on fathers, husbands, and sons) would then be recognized as social responsibilities, to be funded out of general taxation.

Elements of this strategy have always featured in feminist campaigns, but when followed through to what might seem the logical conclusion, usually lead to serious disquiet. One problem is that this approach promises equality for the sexes without changing what the men have to do: this looks rather like the man who extricates himself from pressure to do an equal part of the housework by buying a dishwasher or employing a cleaner. The deeper problem is that handing children or aging parents over to full-time institutional care falls short of most people's vision of a humane and caring society—and certainly falls short of what most feminists have wanted to see. In opposition to this, an alternative has been developed, premised on enabling a different division of labor between the sexes inside the home. This second strategy leaves the responsibility for care work primarily as a private responsibility, shared equally between women and men.

THOSE PURSUING this second line of argument rarely think of "shared parenting" (or to extend this to the sick and elderly, "shared caring") as a matter of exhortation, for there are clearly structural features in contemporary societies that encourage us to carry on in the old unequal way. Most obviously, women still tend to earn less than men. In domestic units containing two parents, it then makes economic sense for the woman rather than the man to leave employment in order to care for the children or for the women to change to a part-time job. Wage differentials thereby reinforce responsibility differentials, while the hours and timing of work are very unforgiving toward those trying to combine paid employment with parenthood. As a serious alternative, the equal-shares model depends on major changes in the hours and conditions of work to enable both women *and* men to work what would currently be considered part time: each doing a maximum of (say) thirty hours a week in paid employment, each then able to take an equal part in the unpaid labors of care.

The scenario premised on public provision has obvious limits, set by our perceptions of what counts as loving care. The second scenario is also limited, if only because many

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households contain only one adult and would not benefit from any strategy of equal shares. The best solution lies somewhere between the two, with a significant increase in public provision combined with a redistribution of responsibilities between women and men. The state, that is, should assume more responsibility than it currently does for human well-being, should not treat looking after the vulnerable as a predominantly private (read, female) responsibility, and should shift its order of priorities so as to give greater prominence to questions of care. But simply handing over to the state what used to be carried out within the hierarchical family (moving women, as Scandinavian feminists have described it, from private to public dependence) can never be a complete answer. It is also at odds with what I have indicated as a long-standing feminist distrust of the over-centralized state.

Where private and/or voluntary associations fit in is probably the least developed part of this. There are feminists who see sexual equality as incompatible with the market economy; they would argue for a much reduced role for the market-based private associations engaged in production or marketing. There are feminists who favor greater decentralization; they would argue for a much increased role for nongovernmental, voluntary associations in the organization of social life. There are still others who regard voluntary associations as the last resort of the reactionary traditionalist, and the least amenable to sexual equality; they would regard a redistribution of responsibilities from the family to the voluntary sector as making things worse rather than better. This is perhaps the point at which the other side of the hyphen takes over: it matters whether one is a liberal-feminist, socialist-feminist, postmodern-feminist, and so on. Feminism tells us always to check out the consequences for sexual equality. It is the other elements in our ethical system that determine our position on voluntary associations and civil society. ●

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1. Jodi Dean, "Including Women: The consequences and side effects of feminist critiques of civil society" (*Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 18, 3/4, 1992).

2. David Green, *Reinventing Civil Society: The Rediscovery of Welfare Without Politics* (London: Institute for Economic Affairs, 1993).

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Rescuing Civil Society

Michael Walzer

THE FAMOUS American liberalism/communitarianism debate, which is now being reproduced (at least among academic political theorists) in many parts of the world, is far less important for real politics than the recognition of two competing kinds of communitarianism, one focused on the state and one on civil society. I want to describe these two, and then argue that each of them can play a part, but not in isolation from the other, in helping us address the hardest problems of contemporary society.

(1) The civic republican, Jacobin, statist model—which holds that there is only one really important community, the political community, whose members and agents are the citizens themselves, all of them, conceived as active participants in democratic decision making. Ideally (in Rousseau's description, for example) they "fly" to the public assemblies; they are eager to join in debates over public policy; when they choose positions, they regularly set the common good over their private interests; they "give the law to themselves," and live in accordance with this self-legislation. They proudly exemplify the civic virtues. Theirs is a noble image, but, perhaps for that reason, their work doesn't extend to the more prosaic administrative and distributive activities of the republican state. They are high-minded amateurs, devoted volunteers, but only for the highest tasks; they meet to argue about the great issues of the day. Administration and distribution are left to professionals, to a civil service whose work is determined but not joined by ordinary citizens. In principle, at least, all the citizens participate in deciding how they are to be served, and then the civil service serves everyone.

(2) The pluralist, multiculturalist, model—which holds that there are many communities, based on class, religion, ethnicity, neighborhood, and so on. The state is now understood as a framework, a social union of social unions (in immigrant societies like the United States, a "nation of nationalities"), where intensity, commitment, and the most satisfying forms of common work are realized in the plural social unions, which the singular state supports and facilitates. In the different communities, participation, because it is generated by very strong feelings of solidarity, is focused less on argument and decision making (though the members do have to make decisions) than on mutual aid, and the professional civil service is partly replaced by voluntary social service. Ordinary members serve each other, committing themselves to the everyday work of welfare, schooling, communal upkeep, and celebration. Like republican citizens, they are amateurs, but they are more widely committed than citizens commonly are: they work as recruiters, organizers, administrators, teachers, fund raisers, "helping hands." They assist the poor, visit the sick, and console the bereaved.

Both these communitarian doctrines are reactive in character; both express anxiety as much as ambition, and if the anxiety is sometimes exaggerated, it is nonetheless legitimate. The first communitarianism responds to a decline in the commitment and participation of citizens—manifest in nonvoting, distrust of governmental institutions and officials, resignation, and apathy. The second responds to a kind of freewheeling individualism that undercuts religious, ethnic, class, and regional identification and, what may be more important, weakens the familial loyalties that ground all the forms of collective identity and help to reproduce them. In the United States, a number of recent studies have demonstrated (though not beyond scholarly dispute) a sig-

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nificant decline in associational activity—a loss of membership in many of the most important social unions and a sharp drop in attendence at meetings. Indeed, a whole series of graphs, put together by the Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam, show exactly the same pattern of decline: a line angled sharply downward that measures voting; other forms of political activity; membership in the mainstream churches (though evangelical and pentecostal sects are growing); membership in political parties, labor unions, philanthropic organizations, and parent/teacher groups; the number of people regularly reading newspapers; and the number engaged in team sports (as distinct from solitary exercise, which is definitely on the rise). It may be too soon to say what all this means, but it does make the two forms of communitarianism alike in this respect—that they both represent a worried politics. They both have revivalist aims.

I WANT TO argue that these two communitarianisms can help each other—and will have to do that if there is to be any help at all. But the more common idea is that the second communitarianism must rescue the first. An interesting alliance of conservatives and radicals put their hopes in associational vitality, voluntary work, and philanthropic contributions. So let me begin there.

Communities and associations inhabit the space of civil society, which is framed but not dominated by the state. Given the various financial, political, and moral difficulties of the contemporary state, it is to civil society that many people now look to solve the problems that the state was once expected to solve—above all, the problems of poverty, unemployment, and exclusion. (I have looked there too, as in my *Dissent* article "Socializing the Welfare State," Summer 1988.) The plural social unions are called to the rescue of the singular social union; the members of civil society must do what the citizens of the state can't do—even though these are the same people.

But if this rescue is to be accomplished, we must address frankly three features of civil society—inequality, fragmentation, and fitfulness—that stand in its way. When we do that, we will see that the communities of civil society require help from the same state that they are called to rescue. The social union of social unions cannot dispense with either its singularity or its pluralism. The one and the many are often described in philosophical literature as if they were opposed to each other, but in politics and society what we must hope for is their cooperation. But this is too abstract. Let's look more closely at the three obstacles to the project of a civil-society rescue.

Inequality

Civil society is a realm of inequality. Its various groups do not have anything like the same capacity to accumulate resources and provide services. All the forms of inequality—of education, wealth, political access, and professional competence—are reflected and even magnified in the organizational life of civil society, so that the weakest groups have the weakest organizational presence. Of course, the stronger groups sometimes extend their help to members of the weaker ones—as when unions work for the benefit of workers generally or church-supported hospitals and nursing homes serve the larger community. What we look for in civil society, however, is self-help and mutual aid. The goal of any pluralist communitarianism must be an equalizing of capacities, so that all men and women are capable of organizing in defense of their interests. All the different groups that coexist in civil society should be capable of serving their own members *and also* of providing services to needy individuals beyond their boundaries. If we don't achieve this, we will repeat in civil society the pattern of clientage and dependency that has sometimes characterized state welfare services and undermined their effectiveness. But this equality of communal capabilities requires the engagement of the state itself.

In a famous speech delivered at the Republican Party convention in 1988, George Bush described the voluntary activities of ordinary men and women in civil society as "points of light," as if the encompassing state were a realm of darkness (a common American view, which is more rare in Europe). In fact, even in America, civil society's points of light depend on electricity provided by the

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state, largely in the form of tax money. The strongest groups in American society (which tend to be ethnic/religious combinations, like Irish Catholics, German and Scandanavian Lutherans, Jews, and so on) could not pay for the life-cycle services they currently provide, from day care centers and nursery schools to old-age homes and burial societies, without access to state funds. Something like 60 percent of the money spent by Catholic Charities and the Jewish Federations, the examples that I know best, comes from tax money. Weaker groups (black Baptists the most important, given the long history of racism in the United States) could in principle get the same money but in fact don't get it on the same scale. They aren't organized to receive it; they don't have a sufficient material and institutional base of their own; they don't have the same access to political power as older, more established communities. If state programs are to help them, they will have to be designed specifically for that purpose. This kind of help can't come from within civil society, except in the form of political and moral support.

The voluntary giving of money, and also of time and energy, is central to associational life. But no dispersed community, without coercive power, can fund by itself the services necessary in a modern society. Marx thought that the factory system would rescue the working class from this dispersion, bringing its members together in large numbers and requiring very high levels of cooperative work. Indeed, European social democracy was the product of that concentration and cooperation. Its extensive organizational network, the many services it provided for its supporters, and the time, energy, and money that they contributed to it—all this was made possible by a common class culture, which had its origin in the experience of the modern factory. But today the working class is as dispersed as many ethnic and religious communities—or, it might be better to say, its members are similarly integrated into a mass society and a commercial culture that don't allow for the easy reproduction of any particularist community, whether it is based on social class or religious belief or ethnic history or residential proximity. And that makes the mobilization of resources in civil society harder than it once was—and the role of the state crucially important.

HENCE THE permanence of the state: it isn't going to wither away. That old Marxist vision, which has been taken over in the United States by libertarians and free-marketeers, is still a fantasy. But if the state is to play its part, there must be a solidarity of citizens. The first kind of communitarianism, the civic-republican model, must have some reality over and above the pluralist solidarities of class, faith, ethnicity, and neighborhood. I am speaking now in the imperative mode, reiterating a programmatic commitment that I am not sure I know how to implement. Still, I know what is necessary: democratic participation must be not only a value, but a valued experience of large numbers of citizens—so that the sense of common effort works in the singular political community as it works in the plural communities of civil society. In the United States today, however, fewer than 50 percent of our citizens even bother to vote (voting percentages are much higher in Europe, though there are signs of decline in some countries). This suggests a degree of political alienation that is disastrous for American welfarism. And when the state commitment to welfare declines, so does the capacity of Catholics, Lutherans, Jews, and so on, to provide services of their own.

But the process works the other way, too: if political alienation undermines civil society, so associational weakness undermines the value of citizenship. Though participation in civil society cannot substitute for democratic engagement, it can inspire and sustain that engagement. All the available evidence suggests that activists in civil society are also active citizens. Hence the argument that brings together the two communitarianisms: that only a revival of associational life will produce a political revival, and only a political revival will produce the commitment (and eventually the resources) necessary to overcome the inequalities of associationalism. Only the two together can bring excluded men and women into the common life. This same interdependence holds also with regard to the second obstacle

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to civil society's rescue mission.

Fragmentation

Civil society is a realm of fragmentation and division. The state, by contrast, at least in principle, is a universal society. Citizenship is a status available to all the residents of the territory the state controls (with whatever qualifications of time for new immigrants). I know that this isn't the case in all existing democracies, but it seems to me the appropriate aim of a democratic politics—that everyone whose life is directly determined by the state, everyone directly subject to its coercive power, should be represented in state decision making. The associations of civil society, by contrast, are ineradicably particularist, even when they defend a universal creed and are as open to new members as their specific character and purposes allow. For they coexist with other associations defending other universal creeds and competing for new members. And, of course, many associations are not universal in any sense; they advance particular interests that conflict with other particular interests. In both these cases, the associations promote identities that are shared with specific people, and not with others, and work in civil society engages some men and women, and not others. All this defines a pattern of difference: creeds, interests, associates, and activities. It is because associations are specific and enclosed that intense solidarities arise within them. And it is these solidarities that make possible the gifts of time, energy, and money, and the widespread (though perhaps declining) readiness to join in political struggle, religious communion, and mutual aid.

Strengthen these groups, and you intensify the differences among them. At least, that is one of the dangers always present in civil society. It is clearly exemplified in (some) contemporary versions of identity politics, which serve indeed to reinforce necessary solidarities but do so at a very high cost, for they divide the citizens and make democratic politics harder than it need be. One remedy for this divisiveness comes from within civil society itself: if it is a realm of fragmentation, then identities within it are neither given for all time nor singular in character. The same people can commit themselves to different associations, and their cross-cutting memberships and the blurred boundaries that result provide the best social background for democratic politics. So churches bring together men and women from different classes, professions, and political parties; unions bring together people with different religious and ethnic affiliations; and so on. But if this pattern of overlapping association is to be sustained, we need a critique of, and some signficiant resistance to, what Lewis Coser once called "greedy institutions"—organized groups that demand total commitment from their members, that lay claim to all their time, energy, and available money. For obvious reasons, greedy institutions make for intolerance, whereas plural memberships and divided loyalties make for toleration.

A RECENT STUDY of the Weimar Republic by Sheri Berman, a political scientist at Princeton, suggests that the totalizing ambition of (some of) its most important groups was one of the causes of the troubles that lay ahead. Members of both Catholic and social democratic associations, for example, were more resistant than other Germans to the appeals of Nazism. But these two groups had hardly any overlapping membership; there was very little coming and going between them and little mutual understanding or respect among their members; and so they were not able to cooperate against the Nazis. Perhaps cooperation wasn't in the cards anyway: the church was far more conservative in those years than it is today, and social democrats were often militant atheists. But these far-reaching ideological divisions were closely connected to the virtually total institutional division between the two groups. Greedy institutions are the enemies of civil society and of the only viable form of democratic politics in the modern world: the politics of coalition and compromise. And yet the very greed of these institutions inspires in their members an exceptional devotion and commitment. Loosening the ties involves real losses, which are nonetheless necessary to the survival of pluralism.

Another remedy for the divisiveness of civil society lies in the actual experience of democratic politics. For state membership always

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overlaps with the various associational memberships; the one includes the many. And if the state is a democracy, and the citizens are active within it, they will inevitably deal with one another every day, in many different ways, in conflict and cooperation. They will argue and organize, but also bargain and compromise. So democratic encounters serve over time to moderate associational difference. At least this can happen, if the encounters are frequent and the outcomes important to the citizens. Massive apathy and withdrawal not only weaken the democratic state, they make civil society a more dangerous place. In the United States, the most extreme forms of identity politics have developed among groups that are seriously underrepresented in the political arena or withdrawn or excluded from it. Bringing them into the state would open new possibilities for cooperation in civil society also. But it is still a question, given one further feature of civil society, just how extensive these possibilities really are.

Fitfulness

Civil society is a realm of fitfulness, of part-time engagement and occasional, undisciplined work. Of course, it has its own full-time professionals (in American schools of business and management these days, students are trained to run nonprofit organizations), but for most people volunteering in civil society is an after-hours activity. When undertaken by unemployed women, still the most common volunteers though their numbers are declining, it comes after the work of family and household (for these women are never really unemployed); when undertaken by working men and women, it comes after the workday or -week. This is an intermittent activism, not subject to market or bureaucratic controls. Many men and women never volunteer at all; many of those who do are enthusiastic for a while and then drift away. Even for the most conscientious, work in civil society is rarely a day-in, day-out commitment. Nor can it be: making a living, making a home, raising one's own children all come first.

In principle, work in civil society is socially valued (hence George Bush's "points of light"). Certainly, the various associations find ways of honoring their most important volunteers—especially, but not only, those who volunteer their money. But unpaid work is not greatly respected in capitalist societies. This is most clearly true among men, since so many of the helping activites are thought to be women's work: nice things to do, but not compatible with success in the marketplace. For men already successful, of course, leading a philanthropic campaign or serving as the lay president of a religious or cultural association is more than a nice thing to do; it displays and reinforces previous economic success. But any lesser work is likely to be thought demeaning. For ordinary volunteers, the work has to be its own reward; there isn't any other—no compensation of any sort, no expense accounts, no health insurance or pensions, very little public recognition.

THE MOST radical proposals for bringing civil society to the rescue of the state (they come mainly from dissident social democrats in Europe: see Claus Offe, "Full Employment: Asking the Wrong Question," *Dissent*, Winter 1995) involve changing all of this. It isn't only a question of strengthening associational activism but of making it into steady work for significant numbers of men and women who are unlikely to find useful work or, in many countries today, any work at all in the market economy. This would obviously require considerable commitment on the part of civil society's steady workers—of a kind familiar on the old left, whose militants often committed themselves to something like full-time work for the Cause. These people were certainly volunteers, but they were paid subsistence wages and they looked forward to revolutionary triumph. Within the movement, at least, they commanded great respect and often wielded real power. It will not be easy to reproduce conditions of that sort in associations where the work goes on and on with no expectation of a glorious conclusion; even the churches, or most of them, are not ready in the last years of the twentieth century to proclaim the near coming of the end of days.

Nonetheless, it is possible to imagine new forms of reward that might allow men and women to sustain a life in civil society or to

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move back and forth between civil society and the market, committing themselves for years at a time in each place. A guaranteed annual income is one possibility, though many people might find such a sharp break between work and reward morally problematic (and then it would be politically problematic, too). If everyone had the same guarantee, workers in civil society would be true volunteers, but there would be a social price to pay: productive work would be taxed not only for the benefit of people who volunteered, but also for the benefit of people who didn't volunteer, who chose leisure instead. Given the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bourgeois critique of aristocratic parasites, and the nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialist critique of bourgeois parasites, and the contemporary right-wing campaign against welfare parasites, I find that arrangement very difficult to imagine . . . or to justify.

THE MORE likely alternative would involve subsistence pay, with benefits, for men and women who chose to work for all their lives or some part of their lives in civil society. These would still be volunteers, for they would forgo the greater incomes that might be available in the marketplace. Commitment would still be necessary; the point of the payments would be to make it economically possible. Since the payments would be the same across all (or almost all) the groups that make up civil society, they would also serve to reduce the inequalities of associational life.

It is radically unclear whether significant numbers of people would choose this kind of volunteering. But any increase in the number of volunteers would improve the services provided by civil society, and the payments would presumably make for less fitfulness, more discipline, in the different associations. Once again, however, only a very strong state would be able to collect and distribute the necessary funds. And the solidarity of the citizens would also have to be very strong if those engaged in productive work were to agree to be taxed to pay for those who opt out. I don't mean to suggest that work in civil society isn't importantly productive; nonetheless, the people doing that work would not be paying taxes, and so they would depend on the goodwill of the others. And this goodwill would have to run deep, since there are sure to be abuses.

Bringing civil society to the rescue of the state would require state action on a very large scale. This is a paradox, I suppose, but one that can, at least in theory, be solved. What would be necessary is a political movement of a sort that isn't historically uncommon, though nothing like it is currently on the horizon. Its activists would be drawn from civil society; its activities would take place in the arena of democratic politics. It would be a movement for social change. The activists would be, at least initially, men and women already active in the many different associations that stand to gain from public recognition of voluntary work. The mainstream religious groups, and the new environmental and feminist organizations, might take the lead. But social change of this sort would also be in the interest of labor unions, not only because their own volunteers would benefit but also because the possibility of work in civil society might tighten the labor market, reducing the size of Europe's "reserve army" or creating alternatives to America's "second economy." Still, we haven't seen a social movement of this scope for a long time, and the weaknesses in both state and civil society that inspire communitarian revivalism suggest that it may be a long time coming.

One thing, however, seems clear: the contemporary neoliberal campaign against the state (or, better, against the state budget) will have to be defeated before we can even hope for the full flowering of civil society. Democratic politics requires vigorous associations, but it must also cope with the inequalities that arise within the associational world, the frequent divisiveness of communal solidarities, and the fitful and undisciplined character of voluntary work. This means that men and women active in civil society won't have the effects we need them to have unless they are also committed citizens, working (voluntarily) to create a state that values and supports their activism. ●

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Feminists, Racketeers, and the First Amendment

Wendy Kaminer

FIRST AMENDMENT freedoms are inevitably invoked by provocateurs and dissenters seeking to change or complain about the status quo, so it's not surprising that anti-abortion protesters have discovered free speech. After abortion was legalized and normalized in the early 1970s, pro-choicers suddenly had the law on their side, and pro-fetal-life advocates began adopting the tactics of earlier protest movements. Picketing abortion clinics and conducting sit-ins, they likened themselves to civil rights activists of the 1950s and 1960s.

This analogy broke down when radicals in the anti-abortion movement turned from civil disobedience to violence, in addition to protests that bordered on criminal harassment of women seeking entry into abortion clinics. The enraged activists who organize clinic blockades resemble the segregationists who surrounded Little Rock's Central High School in 1956 much more than the besieged African-American students trying to enter the school. Many anti-abortion activists today are not only engaged in loud or angry speech. The arsenal of their movement includes clinic invasions, assaults on clinic workers, bombings, and the shootings of obstetricians. Shortly after the October 1998 murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian (the seventh practitioner killed), the FBI warned dozens of other doctors that an anti-abortion Web site was distributing detailed information about them and their families. Abortion providers have taken to wearing bulletproof vests; a Planned Parenthood clinic in Boston, site of a fatal shooting in 1994, operates behind bulletproof glass.

As some anti-abortion activists have turned toward violence, crossing the line between protected speech and criminal conduct with increasing frequency, conflicts about speech and abortion rights have increased. Not that distinctions between speech and conduct are always self-evident: people opposed to abortion have fundamental rights to rally or picket outside abortion clinics, to accuse women of killing their babies, or to exhort them to consider adoption instead. They don't have the right to block the path of women seeking to enter clinics, as many do. The Supreme Court has upheld injunctions prohibiting protests directly outside the entrances to two abortion clinics that had been targeted by highly intrusive protesters. In one case, *Schenck v. Pro-Choice Network of Western New York*, a lower court found evidence of "physical obstruction, intimidation, harassment, crowding, grabbing, and screaming," which continued even after the issuance of a temporary restraining order and made it impossible for police to ensure clinic access.

FEELING UNDER the gun, quite literally, many pro-choice advocates cheered the April 1998 verdict in *NOW v. Scheidler*, a landmark civil action for extortion brought by the National Organization for Women (NOW) against several militant leaders of the radical anti-abortion movement and their organizations. NOW successfully sued Joseph Scheidler, Andrew Scholberg, and the Pro-Life Action League and former Operation Rescue leader Randall Terry (who settled the case against him) under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations law (RICO). Enacted in 1970, RICO was aimed at organized crime. It allows individuals to be prosecuted for their involvement in a criminal "enterprise," and makes them liable for treble damages in civil actions brought by their victims. NOW obtained an $85,926 damage award (on behalf of two target clinics), which

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is tripled under RICO. Since the case was a class action, any additional abortion clinics that prove they were harmed by the defendants could seek damages against them.

If the verdict in *Scheidler* survives appeal, it may greatly curtail protests by anti-abortion radicals. Few would lament a decline of clinic violence—but many if not most abortion protests involve pure speech, however obnoxious or belligerent. The use of RICO against a political movement has been rightly decried by some civil libertarians because it will inevitably chill political speech.

RICO doesn't target individual crimes, like clinic bombings; it targets and aims to destroy entire enterprises that often involve legal as well as illegal activities. (RICO was originally designed to combat organized crime's infiltration of legitimate businesses.) RICO focuses on "patterns of racketeering activity"; individual defendants may be held liable for all activities of the enterprise if they agree to the commission of two illegal acts involved in it. Thus, numerous people who are essentially unknown to each other and involved in unrelated predicate acts can be tried together and held liable for each other's crimes, so long as they were committed under the auspices of the "enterprise." RICO differs from traditional conspiracy law in allowing alleged members of an enterprise to be tried en masse for one another's offenses.

The particular acts at issue in the *Scheidler* case generally involved "extortion," allegedly aimed at driving clinics out of business. According to the complaint, the defendants "conspired to use threatened or actual force, violence or fear to induce clinic employees, doctors, and patients to give up their jobs, give up their economic rights to practice medicine, and give up their right to obtain medical services at the clinics." Notice that the defendants were not charged with actually engaging in arsons or bombings; most of the acts of "extortion" for which they were held liable involved clinic blockades. (Federal law now prohibits clinic blockades, however; RICO prosecutions are not needed to police them.)

The *Scheidler* defendants' incentive was not economic but ideological: they were engaged in political protests, not a campaign to open a competing chain of reproductive-health-care clinics. It's not difficult to understand the threat that the *Scheidler* case poses to other protest groups—for example, those who boycott or picket businesses accused of discrimination. Indeed, NOW itself has reason to fear expansive interpretations of federal laws intended to regulate economic activity. It was once the subject of an unsuccessful civil action occasioned by an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) boycott and brought by the state of Missouri under the Sherman Act. Ruling against the state, a federal appeals court held that NOW's right to boycott was "privileged" by the First Amendment, and that the Sherman Act was not intended to apply to NOW's pro-ERA activities, which were primarily political, not commercial.

JUST AS the Sherman Act was not intended to regulate political movements, RICO was not supposed to brand ideologically motivated activists as racketeers or extortionists. If a group of NOW members organize pickets and blockades outside porn shops, with the intent of shutting them down or greatly discouraging their patronage, and if some shops are firebombed, should NOW leaders be held liable under RICO if they have indulged in inflammatory rhetoric about the dangers of pornography?

The question of RICO's applicability to politically motivated actions is not new. The use of RICO against anti-abortion protesters was first upheld by a federal court (the Third Circuit Court of Appeals) in a 1989 case, *Northeast Women's Center v. McMonagle*. But the Second Circuit adopted a contrary reading of RICO in *U.S. v. Ivic*, a 1993 case involving an attempted assassination by a group of Croation nationalists. In *Ivic*, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals considered the legislative history of RICO (and the common definition of racketeering) and held that RICO applied only to economically motivated crimes.

The following year, however, the Supreme Court disagreed and sided with the Third Circuit. In *NOW v. Scheidler*, a 1994 appeal to a lower federal court order dismissing NOW's complaint, the Court held that RICO is not

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limited to acts "motivated by an economic purpose." (NOW's case then proceeded to trial.)

This holding was urged on the Court by strange bedfellows: the federal government and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). (Both filed amicus briefs.) Government officials generally favor expansive interpretations of criminal statutes, and they have a particular interest in using RICO against political terrorists. The ACLU's situation is more interesting: the organization is torn between its respective commitments to reproductive choice and to free speech. During 1969 congressional hearings on RICO, the ACLU advised limiting the statute to prosecutions of organized crime, cautioning against its application to political protests. In *NOW v. Scheidler*, however, the ACLU argued that economic incentive was a "poor proxy" for First Amendment interests: some money-making enterprises, like video stores that sell sexually explicit material, are engaged in protected activity. Some political organizations committed to illegal acts of violence are not.

Still, as the ACLU stressed in its amicus brief, constitutional rights of speech and association impose strict limitations on RICO prosecutions of political groups. Extortion must be narrowly defined to exclude mere advocacy and angry rhetoric, and protest leaders should not be held vicariously liable for the acts they did not authorize or approve. In *NOW v. Scheidler*, the Court did not decide whether or not RICO prosecutions of political groups were barred or severely restricted by the First Amendment, at least in some cases (the question was not formally before it); but in his concurrence, Justice David Souter observed that "RICO actions could deter protected advocacy," adding that a First Amendment defense would be available to any protest groups sued under RICO.

THE SUPREME COURT itself clarified the First-Amendment limits of civil actions against political groups in a 1982 case that should serve as a precedent for a *Scheidler* appeal. In *NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware*, the Court held that the NAACP could not be held liable for a few acts and threats of violence that occurred during a prolonged boycott of white merchants in Claiborne County, Mississippi, in the late 1960s. The Court's holding in this case speaks to the essence of a RICO prosecution, which mingles lawful and unlawful activity (speech and violence) and makes speakers liable for the violent acts of their associates.

Protesters in Claiborne County were charged with coercing adherence to the boycott: African Americans who patronized target stores were publicly identified and vilified; four people who ignored the boycott were the victims of vandalism; in a couple of cases, shots were fired at the victims' homes. One boycott leader, Charles Evers, threatened to "break the damn neck" of any black who patronized a white-owned business.

But, as the Supreme Court observed, the boycott primarily involved protected activity—pickets, marches, speeches, and "the practice of persons sharing common views banding together to achieve a common end." Even some of the activities that were the subject of the complaint—like the exposure of blacks who violated the boycott—consisted of protected speech, however "offensive" or "coercive." The threatening rhetoric of Evers was also protected

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advocacy: it did not immediately and directly incite violence. None of the violence that did occur was authorized by Evers or the NAACP.

RICO may permit criminal or civil actions against members of an "enterprise" that is engaged in some illegal activities, but as the Court stressed in *Claiborne Hardware*, "civil liability may not be imposed merely because an individual belonged to a group, some members of which committed acts of violence." Those acts are unprotected and may, of course, be punished, but when they occur "in the context of constitutionally protected activity . . . 'precision of regulation' is demanded." And, as the Supreme Court held in a landmark 1969 case (*Brandenburg v. Ohio*), protesters cannot be held liable for merely advocating the use of force or violence, unless it is "directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action."

What does this mean for the *Scheidler* case? Remember that Scheidler and his codefendants were not accused of committing any violent acts. Instead, according to the *New York Times*, NOW attorney Fay Clayton charged that they created a climate conducive to violence. Creating or changing a climate of opinion or emotion, however, is precisely what political protesters aim to do; it is protected activity. Did Scheidler do more? He allegedly told his followers, "You can try for fifty years to do it the nice way or you can do it next week the nasty way." Whether this was mere advocacy, like Charles Evers's threat to break the necks of people who did not observe the boycott, or direct incitement to imminent violence, is a difficult question of fact. Only if Scheidler's remarks constituted unprotected incitement to violence can he be held individually liable for their consequences. But "precision of regulation" is required: neither he nor his organization nor any of its members should be punished for any of the protected activities in which they engaged. RICO is a very blunt instrument; the First Amendment requires a scalpel. ●

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The Algebra Project and Democratic Politics

Jeffrey C. Isaac

I FIRST READ about the Algebra Project in February 1993, in a *New York Times Magazine* article profiling Bob Moses, the legendary former field director of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who in the 1960s had courageously promoted black voter registration and civil rights in Mississippi. Entitled "Mississippi Learning," the piece celebrated Moses's current career as a math educator dedicated to enhancing the educational prospects and economic opportunities of poor, mainly African-American children, presenting this career as the true fulfillment of Moses's prior activity as a democratic activist and civil rights leader.

I found this story heartening, but of little political interest until two years later, when I read Meta Mendel-Reyes's *Reclaiming Democracy: The Sixties in Politics and Memory*, and discovered that Reyes too found Moses's story powerful—as an example of the effacement of historical memory about the true significance of the participatory democracy for which SNCC struggled. Instead of telling this story, Mendel-Reyes wrote, "the *Times* tells a generic story of a young radical who grew up, setting aside childish politics for a career which promises to improve the lives of individuals without threatening the unequal distribution of power. At most, Moses's students may be better able to calculate the widening gap between their own incomes and those of the rich." While praising Moses's sincerity, Mendel-Reyes questioned "how math literacy can replace the key to citizenship for which Moses and SNCC fought during the sixties: the right to participate fully in politics." Mendel-Reyes, to be sure, was principally concerned with the *Times*'s treatment of the "maturation" of Moses the sixties radical rather than with Moses himself, linking this treatment to other instances of media trivialization of sixties radicalism. But she left no doubt that, for her, Moses's current activities were insufficiently radical, forswearing an assault on "the unequal distribution of power" in favor of a more meliorist, mainstream effort to promote math literacy as a route to conventional economic advancement.

BUT JUST what exactly would a wholesale attack on "the unequal distribution of power" look like, and is such a vision even remotely plausible under current conditions? Mendel-Reyes voiced standard "left" charges against meliorism and narrowness of vision; yet it struck me as politically impractical, and set me to thinking anew about Moses and his Algebra Project. What is the political significance of the project? Does it represent an innovative experiment in democratic citizenship or does it embody a conventional, and fairly conservative, vision of schooling as an avenue of individual mobility? Does it represent a compromise with existing institutional arrangements or a creative way of challenging them? The project is intrinsically interesting because of Moses's historical importance and his personal trajectory as a radical activist, and it raises questions about the legacies of the sixties.

But beyond this, the project represents an innovative attempt to address problems of poverty and inequality, especially in inner cities plagued by both. That American inner cities are the sites of extraordinary economic deprivation and cultural despair is beyond question. That there currently exists no political will to address this matter is equally beyond question. This situation has many dimensions, but perhaps none is as troubling as the crisis of inner city schools.

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In his *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, Jonathan Kozol offers a bracing account of the physical, moral, and pedagogical decay of these schools, and of the extraordinary disparities in funding, resources, and educational quality between such schools and their suburban counterparts. Kozol takes us on a tour of East St. Louis, Illinois; the South Side of Chicago; the South Bronx in New York; Camden, New Jersey; Washington, D.C.; and San Antonio, Texas, and he introduces us to frightened and grossly undereducated children, demoralized and cynical teachers and school administrators, unstaffed, ill-equipped, and overcrowded classrooms, and decaying and polluted buildings that are literally hazardous to the children and educators who occupy them. Kozol quotes extensively from these educators, who repeatedly refer to "landscapes of hopelessness" and "the overwhelming sensation [of] emptiness."

The Algebra Project seeks to address this reality in a disarmingly modest way—by promoting math education and literacy among disadvantaged youth. In an age in which "welfare as we know it" has been repudiated by both major parties, and social democratic solutions to socioeconomic problems are in disrepute, the Algebra Project has to be interesting.

What Is It?

The Algebra Project is a nonprofit organization founded by Bob Moses in 1982, and incorporated in 1991, that seeks to promote math literacy among disadvantaged children. It is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with an additional office in Jackson, Mississippi, that directs the project's southern initiative, which works in a number of cities but also in some of the most impoverished rural areas of the Mississippi Delta. Since its inception the project has served over fifty thousand students in more than one hundred American cities, from Boston, New York, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and Chicago, to Oakland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Orleans, and Jackson, Mississippi.

The project does not offer a freestanding curriculum or present itself as a wholesale alternative to the existing curricula and educational practices of American public schools. Instead, it views itself as a form of pedagogical inspiration for local efforts to enhance educational performance. The national office and its southern branch offer curricular support, teacher training, community-organizing assistance, and practical advice on how to promote math literacy. Although these offices participate in outreach activities, the project is implemented in particular schools and school districts because of the commitment of local actors—parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and students themselves—who make the necessary arrangements so that the project's goals and methods can be incorporated into existing school systems. The project relies upon the development of local coalitions as a matter of practicality and philosophical commitment.

The project rests on two premises that are widely shared by math educators and pedagogues more generally—that algebra is a "gateway" subject necessary for advancement to higher education, and that the practice of educational tracking, in combination with deteriorating urban school systems, has produced inadequate academic preparation and extraordinarily high dropout rates among disadvantaged youth. Moses has argued that this educational crisis subverts democratic equality and impairs citizenship in much the same way that the denial of voting rights in the South did a generation ago. Black sharecroppers, he writes, "didn't have the citizenship requirements of their age. And so they were serfs, absolutely without power. What is happening today is that we are watching the new serfs emerge." These problems of educational disadvantage are exacerbated by the new communication technologies, for these demand new standards of mathematics and science literacy to which inner-city minority and poor youth are denied access. "Unless there is a dramatic turnaround in education for these communities," Moses writes, "we face the prospect of a permanent underclass who, generation after generation, will live on the margins of the nation's economic and political institutions. These constituencies and their Black and Hispanic subsets are in a crisis which the nation has only begun to articulate with a sense of

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urgency. Only with an increased sense of urgency and a deep commitment to enabling full access to the political and economic institutions of this society can we hope to develop solutions to this crisis."

The Algebra Project seeks to combat this through an innovative, Deweyan curriculum centered around viewing mathematics as a language of problem solving rather than as a set of abstract calculating skills. The curriculum involves a five-step method of teaching math concepts that begins with practical problems associated with such ordinary activities as traveling, cooking, coaching, repair work, and music. Students are encouraged to solve problems, to formulate what they have learned in colloquial and then standard English, and finally to translate ordinary language into mathematical symbols. The example usually cited in the literature is Moses's practice of taking students on a ride on the Boston subway system, using "the mathematics of trips" as a way of teaching about positive and negative integers. Ordinary problems associated with calculating and comparing distances are treated as vehicles for teaching abstract mathematical concepts. In the project's more recent African drums and ratios curriculum, students are taught how to construct their own drums, and in the process are encouraged to use their knowledge of rhythm to learn about numerical intervals and proportions.

Also Deweyan in inspiration is the project's participatory model of pedagogy. The math teacher is viewed as a facilitator rather than as an instructor in rote calculation and memorization. Mathematical operations are treated as parts of a larger learning process in which students share experiences and solve practical problems through small-group discussion and cooperative effort. And math learning is treated not as a separate cognitive skill but as a problem-solving tool whose use is connected to a broader process of intellectual inquiry.

EVEN MORE distinctive is the project's self-consciously communal character. One commentary notes that "by linking the content of math education to the future prospects of inner-city children, Moses transformed what had previously been a purely curricular issue into a broader political question. . . . How can a culture be created . . . in which every child is expected to be as good as possible in his or her mathematical development?" In helping to create such a culture Moses and his colleagues have drawn on his practical experience as a SNCC activist. As Moses has described his approach: "What this comes down to is the philosophy of Ella Baker: leadership at the grassroots level. The campaign in Mississippi was mounted with virtually no money. It required a consciousness that leadership to run the effort would emerge from the communities who were working, and it required trying to develop an organizational structure which would encourage the emergence of such leadership."

The Algebra Project similarly seeks to enhance local leadership and to build community at the local level. Parental empowerment is central to the vision. The project has facilitated the organization of Honors Bound parent support groups, helped to promote Saturday-morning algebra courses for parents, and encouraged parental classroom volunteering, in the belief that enhanced math education is a family concern that extends far beyond the formal curriculum and requires a dense support system and adult role models. The project's southern initiative has also helped to establish a Math Games League in Jackson, Mississippi, where student teams participate in after-school and weekend math competitions. The basic idea is to promote a variety of extracurricular activities involving students, parents, and teachers that provide safe and constructive outlets for adolescent energy and at the same time develop mathematical ability and intellectual self-esteem.

Where Is the Politics?

Although the project is clearly an interesting educational effort, its political significance is less clear. Indeed, in conventional terms it seems apolitical, a modest effort to pursue educational enhancement through fairly conventional means—curricular revision, teacher support, parental involvement. Indeed, the project quite explicitly forswears any broad political agenda and professes to be "concerned more about the immediate circum-

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stances of the emerging underclass than in settling large-scale policy questions." While the project is clearly inspired by a conception of "participatory democracy" rooted in the SNCC experience, both its goal of enhancing the college-entrance opportunities for disadvantaged youth and its means of pursuing this goal hardly seem radical in any profound sense.

Yet I think we need to get beyond conventional understandings of "political" and "radical" to appreciate what the project is trying to accomplish. Promoting community networks of educational support that involve youth, parents, teachers, and professionals is in many ways a profoundly political and indeed radical endeavor given the current conditions of life in American inner cities. The project seeks to mobilize civic energy, to build intellectual but also *civic* capacity, and in doing so to transfigure the conditions of life of the new urban poor. Moses has seized on math education as a vehicle for something much more significant—what might be called *democratic community-building*. In Boston, for example, the project's fate was linked to the establishment of a dense network of support that included affiliation with Freedom House, a community-based organization, and the joint establishment of the Summer Academy, an algebra camp incorporating project ideas; the cultivation of working relationships with educators at University of Massachusetts/College of Public and Community Service, Wheelock College, and Northeastern University; and the establishment of an Algebra Consortium joining university personnel, community-group representatives, and interested individuals in support of the project; the acquisition of a grant from the Hasbro Children's Foundation to support project outreach activities in the Boston area; and discussions with school officials that eventually led to development of an Algebra in Middle Schools Project that was implemented in three Boston schools. In Indianola, Mississippi, a Math Games League Board was started as the result of a collaboration between the project's southern initiative and Southern Echo, a Jackson-based community organization dealing with environmental racism and local economic development. When the school board challenged the League's right to after-school access to local schools, community mobilization, spearheaded by a Steelworkers' local, led to a reversal of the board decision and to guarantees of community access to the schools.

Because the project is a national network of local efforts, there is no single recipe for building community support or effecting school reform. In some areas, like Chicago, Algebra Project affiliates are linked to community organizations that are highly politicized around school-board issues, community economic development, and electoral politics. In other areas, like Indianapolis, the project's sponsors are more narrowly focused on math education. But what joins these various local efforts is a common commitment to educational enhancement through community involvement.

THERE IS a vaguely communitarian conception of society at work here. The project's literature clearly indicates a general awareness of the forces that reproduce inner-city poverty and despair and undermine the educational advancement of disadvantaged youth. "Community," in the sense of a dense network of families, schools, intermediate associations, and economic opportunities, is recognized as a *problem* in inner-city neighborhoods, as something that is not preexisting and needs to be developed through painstaking effort. Yet the project does not construct the social universe in terms of ruling or dominant classes or power elites that must be dethroned. Instead it seems to work with a fairly capacious view of the inner city, according to which a range of "stakeholders"—parents, teachers, school bureaucracies, community organizations, local universities and colleges, corporations, philanthropic foundations, and students themselves—might be mobilized behind the effort to promote math literacy and, ipso facto, to promote civil society rather than anomie, despair, and violence. Constructing the political universe in this way is not necessarily naive; it does not presuppose that there will be no scarcity of resources, or conflicts of interests, or efforts on behalf of more powerful groups to frustrate project attempts to alter

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curricula, allocate educational resources, or utilize school facilities. But project supporters argue that the only way forward is to create local forms of power capable of forestalling such resistances. These forms of power are not political in the conventional sense, for they involve no parties or elections, present no broad legislative agenda, and, more profoundly, they are not principally oriented toward the wielding of governmental power. The project seems to understand power in Hannah Arendt's sense, as the capacity of a collectivity to organize itself and to generate a sense of common purpose and commitment. Yet in mobilizing or constituting this power the project clearly seeks to effect change in a public and palpable way, and in this sense is supremely, if modestly, political. It does this in the following ways:

1. *By treating the public schools as a primary space for the development of both individual cognitive aptitudes and the civic capacities of neighborhood residents.* The project treats schools as genuinely public facilities, available for use by citizens during after hours and on weekends—recalling the "social centers movement" of the Progressive era pioneered by Frederic Howe and Edward Ward (and supported by Dewey), which similarly sought to use the schools as "community centers" of recreation, culture, discussion, and debate.

2. *By establishing a financial base that draws upon both public and private sources of support and that expends private monies in public ways.* Although the project relies upon some governmental support—a substantial National Science Foundation grant, but more important, the agreement of public schools and school boards to allocate teachers, class time, and building space to project activities—most of its support has come from grants obtained from an impressive array of philanthropic foundations, from local agencies such as the Boston Foundation and the Greater New Orleans Community Foundation, to national philanthropies such as the MacArthur Foundation, the Lilly Endowment, and the Open Society Institute (which committed $12 million to the project's efforts in 1997). In this sense the project is an example of those "third sector" organizations occupying the space between the market and the state, fulfilling public functions with largely private resources that have received growing attention in recent years. Such organizations have been defended as vehicles for discharging public responsibilites in a time of governmental austerity and for generating public trust and a sense of efficacy in an era of disenchantment with politics.

3. *By promoting a heightened sense of parental responsibility for the education of children, for the effective operation of schools, and, by extension, for the well-being of neighborhoods.* "The family" has been a subject of great controversy in recent years, with conservatives claiming to support the reinstatement of traditional "family values" associated with male-headed, two-parent, heterosexual families, and cultural liberals criticizing the bourgeois family as a "patriarchal" and "heterosexist" institution possessing no special moral privilege. The Algebra Project approach to parental responsibility is consistent with a growing emphasis on a nonmoralistic understanding of family life. On this view, instead of celebrating or condemning "the family," we need to recognize that parents play an absolutely indispensible role in the education of young people, and that parental responsibility and involvement, particularly in disadvantaged neighborhoods, has to be actively promoted, not simply by exhortation, but through the creation of institutions—like regular school volunteering or weekend math classes or mentoring programs—that are genuinely enabling. For liberals, this move involves an acknowledgment of the importance of intermediate institutions and the "limits of social policy"; for conservatives, it involves an acknowledgment of the potentially empowering effect of public, governmental support for institution-building in civil society. As Robert L. Woodson, founder and president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, has maintained: "We must recognize that the survival and proliferation of . . . these grassroots efforts will depend not only upon removing impediments they face but also [on] providing substantial support for their work. If we wish to enjoy the fruits of a civil culture,

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we must be willing to nurture the trees that produce it. . . . This is not a time for benevolent nonintervention."

4. *By the promotion of broad-based coalitions of youth, parents, educators, and community leaders on behalf of educational reforms that have wide effects on community life, establishing networks and associations with potentially more direct political consequences for neighborhood safety, police accountability, the delivery of public services, and economic development.*

Such an effort at community building is clearly a public activity even if it is not directly political in the conventional, governmental sense. The project's modesty should not be mistaken for complacency about economic inequality or racism. Indeed, it can be seen as a reflection of consummate political realism. As Moses has said: "I don't think that at this point you're going to advocate any major reforms . . . the energy that we have needs to be put into . . . getting the target population to a level of consciousness and competence [so that these youth] can carve out for themselves . . . a way to struggle [regardless of] the broader domain [beyond their control]." As this comment indicates, two notions lay behind the project's modus operandi. The first is that for the "target population" of poor, inner-city youth and their families, developing a sense of personal efficacy and social solidarity is a precondition of any more-explicitly-political activity. The second is that the political prospects for major reforms are rather dismal. For these reasons, Moses suggests, a more modest effort recommends itself.

The Limits of Civil Society?

The Algebra Project is still in its relative infancy. As I have noted, since its incorporation in 1991 it has served approximately fifty thousand students. This is no mean feat, but it is still a minuscule proportion of the total population of American middle-school children. The evidence of its success is mostly anecdotal, in the form of numerous newspaper, magazine, and journal articles quoting teachers, principals, parents, and students attesting to the inspirational power of the project's curriculum, to the effectiveness of Math Games in getting at-risk children off the streets, or to the higher proportion of students graduating to advanced algebra and moving on to college. Most of this evidence is positive, but it is too unsystematic to allow any solid generalizations.

More telling is the project's favorable review by such reputable and highly competitive foundations as the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Lilly Foundation, and the Open Society Institute. The 1994 NSF evaluation, for example, concluded:

> The Algebra Project is an important project with a potential to bring about systemic reform in Mississippi schools serving poor children in both rural and urban areas. Although in effect for only two years, we observed positive outcomes in teaching, in students' attitudes and engagement in and around mathematical ideas, in community involvement, and in movement toward systemic reform. . . . The community development process is engaging parents and others who have not previously been involved in education issues. The project is building a strong foundation for systemic change through its unique process of bringing the key stakeholders together and facilitating their involvement in children's mathematics literacy.

In June 1996 the project was formally evaluated by the Program Evaluation and Research Group (PERG) of Lesley College in Cambridge, Massachusetts, whose report was funded by the MacArthur and Lilly Foundations. Like the NSF report, the PERG report praised both the academic seriousness and the community organizing focus of the project, concluding that it is in a "unique position" to be "an agent of systemic change."

The PERG report also called for a more systematic process of self-evaluation and noted a number of obstacles to the project's success. One is the power of entrenched educational interests, which tend to resist project methods. The routine practice of standardized and systemwide testing and the movement toward more rigorous measures of academic aptitude are serious obstacles to the kind of holistic and collaborative learning and community building promoted by the project. Schools that choose to affiliate with the project often place themselves at a disadvantage vis à vis the

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school system at large, where teaching is geared towards standardized tests; and pressures toward homogenization limit the freedom to experiment with more eclectic methods of instruction. Furthermore, many aspects of the project's holistic, community-building approach seem to fall outside the purview of mathematics education broadly defined. Can parental involvement or student self-esteem, for example, be scored in the same way as the ability to calculate? Is the strengthening of civil society likely to be viewed by educational bureaucrats as a central or even an appropriate goal for the expenditure of funds legally earmarked for "education"?

The power of teachers' unions and the elaborate requirements and restraints fixed by collective-bargaining agreements also often limit the operation of the project. It makes special demands on teachers, requiring training and preparation and, even more important, community involvement and the expenditure of time, before school hours, after school hours, and on weekends. These extracurricular demands, especially when uncompensated, are, understandably, often resisted by individual teachers, by their unions, and thus by principals and administrators bound to respect collective-bargaining agreements and bureaucratically determined work rules.

A second, related difficulty concerns the need for a greater resource base, requiring in part that the project be "institutionalized in schools and, therefore, supported by school based funds." A very high percentage of project funds currently comes from "soft money" grants. If the project is to succeed, it will need more stable and public financial support. And, ideally, teacher release and after-hours time would be compensated by school systems committed to the project's methods.

The above issues implicate broad questions of educational policy and school reform, questions about which the project does not seem to have developed any clear programmatic answer. They suggest that in order for the project to succeed in its own professed mission it may have to enter the broader political arena or at least engage in advocacy regarding educational reform. In the absence of success in this area, it appears that the project will remain vulnerable to decisions taken at higher levels by teacher unions, school boards, and foundation boards, and its performance will be contingent on a multitude of unpredictable local forces.

The forces beyond the project's control, however, extend far beyond the school system itself. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the project's success is the broader social environment of the new urban poverty in which it operates. As we have seen, the project claims to be "concerned more about the immediate circumstances of the emerging underclass than in settling large-scale policy questions." But is it possible to successfully address the "immediate circumstances" of undereducation without addressing "large-scale policy questions" regarding criminal justice, urban redevelopment, welfare, health care, and employment? If William Julius Wilson and others are correct, the problem of poverty can only be addressed through a coordinated public policy effort. Yet the project's resolute focus on the immediate circumstances of math literacy seems to limit its ability to agitate on behalf of any such effort.

THIS RAISES an even deeper problem with project strategy. The project views the new information technologies as both challenge and opportunity. Absent math literacy, Moses insists, disadvantaged youth will become virtual "serfs" lacking access to economic opportunity; possessing such literacy, he maintains, such youth will be afforded "participation in the unfolding economic and political era." But this argument presumes that the unfolding economic and political era presents general opportunities and promises prosperity to those possessing the appropriate skills. It views the technological and occupational shape of the unfolding era as a foregone conclusion, and simply—though importantly—seeks access for disadvantaged and minority youth. But what if this picture is misleading? What if intensifying inequality and insecurity is built into the very changes to which the project seeks to adapt? What if the current "third wave" of technological change promises success for some but threatens to drown many others, not simply because they lack the requisite skills but because the new

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economy will need fewer full-time workers, and will rely increasingly upon contracting out, temporary employment, and other forms of "lean and mean" production?

These, of course, are complex issues, about which much more needs to be said. But it would be fair to argue that the Algebra Project works with an optimistic view of the potential of the new technologies that is not wholly warranted; and that its reluctance to develop a critique of political economy constitutes a potentially serious weakness. Indeed, it discloses a latent tension between two possible meanings of the "empowerment" promoted by the project—on the one hand referring to individual career advancement, on the other hand referring to collective action on behalf of publicly generated and governmental remedies to social problems. As Project literature insists, these two forms of "empowerment" should not be counterposed, and ideally they would reinforce one another. But without attention to the broader public-policy questions regarding the availability of jobs and housing, promoting employability is likely to do little more than broaden the pool of those fighting over the crumbs of "third wave" expansion.

Sisyphean Politics

These limitations of the project's strategy are real. Yet identifying them only constitutes an indictment of the project if a plausible case can be made that there is a more "realistic" strategy for addressing the "landscapes of hopelessness" vividly depicted by Kozol and others. Absent such a compelling strategy, the limitations identified here add up to one general point about which project organizers are painfully aware—that they operate in an unjust and recalcitrant world that presents obstacles, resistances, and continual challenges. The question of whether such a compelling, broad political strategy exists and is realistic goes beyond the scope of my argument here. Suffice it to say that an affirmative answer is hardly self-evident. Indeed, Moses himself seems closer to the truth when he insists that "I don't think at this point you're going to advocate any major reforms. . . ."

The Algebra Project is a modest and flawed attempt to counter deeply entrenched and powerfully reinforced effects of urban poverty and neglect. It is not alone. Throughout the country similar projects are sprouting up, as citizens confronting federal cutbacks are forced to address urban problems in more improvisational and grass roots ways. Starved for funding and occupying a hostile environment, these kinds of efforts cannot be expected to master their difficulties or to "solve" the problems against which they set themselves. They are in need of governmental assistance, and are likely to continue to confront frustration and failure in the absence of a significant shift in public policy. But such a shift does not seem forthcoming. And in its absence, such efforts demonstrate two exemplary virtues. First, they represent modest, nonideological, *practical* efforts to deliver services and to remedy pressing problems. Second, in the absence of generous public funding or bureaucratic support, they seek to mobilize the only resource available—concerted human effort, civic energy, ordinary idealism—in order to craft genuinely participatory responses. Groups like the Algebra Project cannot be assessed simply in terms of their measurable impact upon educational performance, or the incidence of teen pregnancy or gang violence, or the availability of affordable housing stock. While these practical results are surely important, the greatest contribution of such groups is less tangible, and indeed incalculable—the generation of solidarity and civic responsibility, and the promotion of active, practically oriented citizenship. They may not position themselves in a frontal assault on the structure of power. And they may never conquer their adversity. But they alter the political equation and afford pride and hope where these are in desperately short supply. For this reason they deserve the serious and sympathetic attention of all who profess their commitment to democratic values. ●

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Unions and Democracy

Replies to Steve Fraser

Stanley Aronowitz

THERE MAY be no more contentious issue in today's labor movement than union democracy. Almost everybody agrees that members should have the right to elect officers, hold regular meetings, and approve contracts negotiated by their leaders. But not everyone agrees that a vital labor movement needs an active rank and file that participates in running its own unions—by making policy decisions and by taking the lead in organizing, bargaining, and other activities such as education and political action. Indeed, the distinction between those who favor a leadership-controlled labor movement and those who advocate rank-and-file power may be the great divide of the 1990s.

Steve Fraser has done a service to the debate by publishing a cautionary, even critical article about union democracy ("Is Democracy Good for Unions?," *Dissent*, Summer 1998). Although Fraser vaguely favors a "democratic" labor movement, he remains unconvinced that union democracy is vital to labor's revival; indeed, the burden of his article is to place reliance on visionary leaders. His argument boils down to two points:

(1) Some of the most effective union leaders, "utterly devoted to organizing, tactically creative and militant, and who've achieved remarkable success...don't care a rat's ass for union democracy; indeed consider it an actual hindrance where a state of undeclared war against employers demands discipline, secrecy and decisive action by small groups of outsiders less subject to daily intimidation."

(2) Advocates of union democracy have misconstrued the nature of trade unions. Unions are not political parties of the social democratic or labor type but instead are "natural monopolists" in the labor market, "prone to defend the interests and express the democratic will of their existing members by excluding others; in America that has meant (and . . . continues to mean) immigrants, blacks, and women." Often, union leaders who attempt to break with these exclusionary practices are "democratically repudiated" by the rank and file. And, he insists, the bureaucracy that emerged with the broad industrial union upsurge of the 1930s was the product of pressure from below: "The rank and file is complicit in the creation of the bureaucracy; the bureaucracy is the legitimate offspring, at least in the case of strong CIO-like upheavals."

Fraser repeats the most celebrated argument against union democracy, offered at the time of the 1955 AFL and CIO merger by Arthur J. Goldberg, the general counsel of the Steelworkers and the AFL-CIO. Although unions are technically voluntary organizations, in reality, according to Goldberg, they are best characterized by the metaphor of an army, with its chain of command and iron discipline. Consequently, genuine rank-and-file union democracy might be destructive to unions and to labor's more progressive social platforms.

Whatever Fraser's democratic sympathies, we are entitled to read his argument as a defense of the existing leadership. He may be right to argue that labor bureaucracy is an organic outgrowth of rank-and-file upheaval. However, the issue is not whether a bureaucracy has formed, but whether an isolated caste of union officials has developed, with its own interests and outlook—officials who operate as enlightened despots and view union members as mere clients. Often the upheav-

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als of the 1930s were not only expressions of discontent with the way employers trampled on workers' rights; they were also directed against craft unions and their leaders, who scorned the project of organizing semi-skilled workers or forced them to conform to craft rules in order to gain entry into the House of Labor. Democracy meant, in the first place, that workers could form unions of their own choosing. Twenty years later, union members were deprived of this choice by the famous Article 20 of the new AFL-CIO constitution, which prohibited competition among affiliates. Since 1955, dissatisfied unionists have effectively lost the option of dumping their existing collective bargaining representative, unless they choose to form independent unions outside the AFL-CIO. Their best chance for deliverance from arbitrary union practices is to throw the rascals out, and they have never ceased to exercise this option. Unlike European workers, who can choose between competing federations, American workers are condemned to seek union democracy of a different and perhaps more radical type. Union democracy is not a leftist pipe dream; in the face of autocracy, it is the only recourse for dissenting unionists.

WHICH EXPLAINS why, from the Steelworkers insurgencies of the late 1950s to the Miners for Democracy movement in the 1970s to the long march to elect a democratic, militant Teamsters leadership in 1991, union democracy has become a program of the militant rank and file and of a section of secondary leaders as well. Honest, militant unionism is today intimately intertwined with the demand for democracy. In locals of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Transport Workers, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the Construction Trades, caucus movements seek to recapture control of their own unions. Although it is true that radicals are often found in the ranks of the opposition (a fact that Fraser seizes on to belittle union democracy), these movements could not have gotten to first base without broad membership support.

There are two models of union democracy: democracy by consent, where the rank and file has formal, but little substantive, power over union affairs; and what I call strong or participatory democracy. The inadequacy of democracy by consent is particularly apparent in many large city unions. In locals consisting of a large number of relatively small units, the business agents and the business manager usually enjoy near-absolute power. Many big-city locals of construction, small manufacturing, and public and private service employees are run as self-perpetuating fiefdoms; some are open father-son affairs. In some cases, such as New York City's District Council 37, financial corruption is rife, even among unions that might be considered socially liberal. In others, notably the construction trades and the Teamsters, only the determined intervention of "outsiders" like the Association for Union Democracy (AUD) and the government has succeeded in restoring a measure of rank-and-file control. In New York City's garment center, union misfeasance takes a different form: the leadership concedes substandard wages and working conditions to the employer—in effect, sanctions sweatshops—in return for employer payments to the benefits fund. Lacking the power, but also the will, to combat flagrant violations of labor standards, the union settles for less than half a loaf. Money may not find its way into a business agent's pockets, but the union has, in recent years, averted its eyes and collected handsome sums for its inattention.

Sometimes the abrogation of union democracy is more subtle. The union leaders might observe the requirement to procure membership consent for a proposed contract settlement but refuse to grant the opposition access to mailing lists, the union newspaper, and other forums in order to present their views.

Fraser effectively demolishes the illusion of the dichotomy of a "virginal rank and file and a venal bureaucracy," but with his neat, stereotypical identification of union democracy with the mythic "New England town meeting," he has dismissed the alternative of strong union democracy. The recently collapsed merger between the AFT and the National Educational Association (NEA) illustrates the difference between the two kinds of union de-

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mocracy. Although there was agreement at the national level and the AFT could be counted upon to routinely approve the merger, many at the NEA convention spoke against it on grounds of democratic difference. The AFT may not be formally autocratic, but it is fair to characterize its modus vivendi as anti-Stalinist democratic centralism. The AFT is a highly centralized, professionally run organization. The full-timers run the union. In most locals, elected officials can serve in perpetuity and the union maintains a large staff of appointed officials at both the local and the national levels to administer its day-to-day affairs. The membership is rarely, if ever, directly invited to participate in policy debates, but is presumed to have consented to policy decisions made at conventions and other meetings by representatives.

In contrast, the NEA has a highly decentralized style of governance. The national leaders and many local officers are subject to term limits; contract settlements are hotly debated among the members; major decisions are taken only after wide consultation with the rank and file. And most elected NEA officials return to the classroom after their term is completed, so they consider themselves on temporary leave when they serve in full-time office. In short, one of the crucial reasons for the merger's failure was the different conceptions of democratic participation between the two organizations.

THE PROBLEM of participation should not be framed entirely in moral or in procedural terms. Despite some signs of life, American unions remain deeply troubled: they represent a smaller proportion of the private-sector workforce than they did in 1934, three years before the Labor Relations Act took effect. In many industries collective bargaining has given way to collective begging; and even with a revived organizing agenda union density continues to slip. Since most unions can no longer claim that they are capable of protecting the jobs of union supporters in organizing campaigns, let alone the jobs of their own members, and since the task of organizing is awesome in the current political environment, some unions have found that calling on their own members to take a leading role in organizing is the most effective way to overcome fear among nonunion workers. Recent union victories against USAir and United Airlines were spearheaded by rank-and-file organizers; the most important advances in white-collar and professional organizing, labor's best-kept secret, were rank-and-file successes.

Many workers will not join unions unless they have a genuine sense of ownership of their organizations. If mighty unions could once promise—and maybe even deliver—the moon, those days are gone, perhaps forever. Today's unions can make only one sound promise: that if workers in union and nonunion shops take the initiative, the organization's resources, full-time organizers, and rank-and-file union members will support them. In short, the revival of solidaristic unionism entails a new and perhaps unprecedented level of rank-and-file participation. The widespread disaffection of many workers from unions may be the result of their perception that unions have become client-based institutions and exclusionary institutions in which members are to be "serviced."

My own observation confirms one of Fraser's insights. Some excellent organizers in the South and in Las Vegas "don't care a rat's ass about union democracy" and have made gains anyway. But these victories are mainly among the working poor, many of whom are recent immigrants. In other sectors, not caring a rat's ass will surely turn off potential members. And after the union achieves bargaining rights in hotels, garment factories, strawberry fields, and other low-wage sites, unless members are vitally engaged in the bargaining and grievance process, unless they take hold of the life of the union, it will quickly disintegrate into an insurance company or, worse, a social service agency. What is at stake in the fight for participatory democracy is the future of the labor movement. When unions deprive the rank and file of choice, when leaders favor mobilization but not participation, they succeed only in driving a deeper nail in labor's coffin. ●

STANLEY ARONOWITZ's latest book is *From the Ashes of the Old: American Labor and America's Future.*

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Herman Benson

STEVE FRASER has been a prime mover in rallying active public support for the labor movement among independent liberal intellectuals, that is, those who are not bound to unions by financial or organizational ties and are free to speak their minds. He took the lead in assembling the forty-one eminent authors, scholars, and educators who in 1995 called for "rebuilding the labor-intellectual alliance." The declaration inspired more than a thousand enthusiasts to attend a "teach-in" on labor at Columbia University in 1996, which was followed by similar gatherings in other universities. The group Fraser gathered has now become a full-fledged organization: Scholars, Artists, and Writers for Social Justice (SAWSJ). For all this he deserves a full measure of credit; there's been nothing like it for decades.

These events are of exceptional significance—symbolic and practical—to our labor movement. Union activists find it heartening when even so mild a turn effected by John Sweeney, accompanied by great promises, can win the sympathies of writers and thinkers who begin to view the labor movement as a fresh force in American life for social justice. It is a sign of how powerful an impact a truly democratized and refurbished labor movement could make on the nation. Labor signifies potential power to intellectuals. Intellectuals bring to labor the kind of approval that it needs so urgently as it seeks to lift itself out of the doldrums. The social power of labor linked to the moral power of intellectuals can become a force to change the nation.

But nothing is perfect.

From the very outset, this new intellectual movement appeared to be diffident on the subject of internal union democracy, not hostile to the abstract *principle* of union democracy but uncomfortable with the *advocacy* of union democracy. The Fraser group's original draft declaration of 1995 omitted any reference to this delicate subject; the final draft ultimately gave union democracy a friendly tip of the hat, but this came only at the insistence of Arthur Schlesinger, who, as an old friend of Joe Rauh, was familiar with the long battles for reform in the Miners and the Steelworkers. At the time, this lapse seemed like an accidental oversight of no significance. Now, after Steve Fraser's piece in *Dissent* ("Is Democracy Good for Unions?," Summer 1998), we can't be so sure.

Our established labor officialdom, not entirely but on the whole, distrusts those who talk too earnestly about internal union democracy and loathes unionists who campaign actively to strengthen it. The labor movement has a long way to go before the barriers to a robust union democracy are lifted. A delicate problem intrudes: is it possible for intellectuals to collaborate amicably and fruitfully with the leadership of the top labor movement on behalf of worthy causes *and at the same time* defend membership rights against abuse by that same leadership? It remains an open question, but leave that aside for the moment.

It would be unreasonable to insist that everyone in, around, or for the labor movement unfurl the flag of internal union democracy and ride away to right the world. Too many other things to do, too many other battles to fight. It takes many different people fighting on various fronts in distinctive ways for various causes to make up the battle for social justice and democracy.

So Fraser could have ignored the subject and still made his fine contribution to the cause, and good luck to him. However, at the request of *Dissent*, he raises the question, "Is Democracy Good for Unions?," a title perhaps chosen by the editors for its jazzy ring. His answer, if any, illustrates that the pro-labor intellectual's attitude toward union democracy can be worse than ambivalent, even depressing.

It is obvious through it all that Fraser distrusts union democracy. He certainly disparages it. After all, he tells us, despite the Teamsters' reforms, Ron Carey turned sour, and a huge number of Teamsters will democratically vote for the unappetizing James Hoffa, Jr. After all, with democracy, workers sometimes vote to maintain racially exclusive hiring sys-

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tems even against the advice of their leaders. After all, the great Walter Reuther could be a ruthless bureaucrat; after all, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in its heyday "was often run without regard to formal democratic procedure." And more of the same is scattered throughout his essay.

This congeries of complaints, however, compiles the case not simply for the defects of *union* democracy, but of *all* democracy. Exercising their sovereign democratic rights, voters have been accused of doing the reprehensible. With your democracy, they chose Reagan and Nixon. Your Clinton turned sour. A huge section of the voting population tolerates racism, supports right-wing bigotry, authorizes the demeaning of families on welfare. With your democracy, we got the Vietnam War. And more of the same.

IT TAKES an enormous leap on the flying rings to start from the inevitable shortcomings of democracy and end with an admiring respect for those who would dispense with that defective democracy. Fraser would surely be appalled if we suggested that some well-intentioned strongman take over in America. But for unions? That's another story.

Fraser revives a stock argument that has been traditionally used to justify repression inside unions. Unions, he notes, are "combat organizations imposing a solidaristic discipline with which to confront a centralized enemy utterly unconcerned with niceties of democratic procedure. Under such conditions, many union leaders secretly believe and practice what one of them openly confessed back in the 1920s: 'As a democracy no union would last six months.'" He can't help expressing admiration for those tough-minded and tough-talking advocates; he even slips into the toughie language. "There are some trade union leaders today . . . utterly devoted to organizing, tactically creative, and militant . . . who've achieved remarkable success against daunting odds in the South and elsewhere who don't care a rat's ass for union democracy . . . indeed consider it an actual hindrance. . . . From afar it's all too easy to declaim against this preoccupation. . . ."

Is he simply reporting facts or arguing for a point of view? It is not quite clear, but we get the drift of it. As we finish the twentieth century, with all we should have learned, must we still be reminded about those tough-minded idealists who will solve our problems by dispensing with democracy?

Arthur Goldberg, defending the practices of our old labor movement forty years ago, formulated the idea nicely: when our nation is at war, we restrict democracy. Unions are eternally at war, therefore they must eternally limit internal democracy.

But unions are engaged in an odd sort of war. The moments of battle are interspersed with much longer periods of amicable armistice, extended truces, and collaboration with the enemy. Even collusion. Sometimes our officers end up on the payroll of the hated enemy. And there is this quintessential difference: when our country is at war, the danger of repression rises. At peace, the nation relaxes. Generally speaking, labor has this upside-down. In those long periods of peaceful relations with employers, bureaucracy is strengthened and restrictions on democracy intensify. But when labor is at war and workers are on strike, the hoops are loosened and the spirit of democracy revives.

Fraser's jaundiced philosophical view of union democracy is shaped by an oddly twisted view of history. For one thing, he doesn't like the Landrum Griffin Act.

Not quite unanimously, the labor establishment denounced the Landrum Griffin Act (LMRDA) as antilabor when it was first adopted in 1959 because, for the first time, it provided protection in federal law for the rights of members in their unions. Since then, however, their protestations have been muted because the experience of almost forty years has exploded their predictions of gloom and doom. Belatedly, Fraser revives their abandoned charge. Landrum Griffin, he writes, is "transparently antilabor."

Actually, the LMRDA has helped effect a sea change inside the labor movement. It has legitimized and strengthed democracy and legalized basic civil liberties in unions, protecting the rights of free speech, free press, the right to assemble, and fair elections for workers inside their unions. Protected by the provisions of federal law, miners were able to oust

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the murderers who ran their union; Teamsters were able to break the hold of organized crime over their national office; seamen were able to oust crooks from control of the Masters, Mates, and Pilots and of the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association.

Before Landrum Griffin, members could be, and were, expelled for forming caucuses, for organized campaigning for union office, for suing in court or complaining to administrative agencies, for circulating petitions within their unions. They were routinely expelled for "slander" when they criticized their officials. All that is now illegal because of the Landrum Griffin Act. Union democracy is now legal, and even reluctantly accepted by the labor establishment.

But Fraser doesn't like the law because, those thirty-nine years ago, it was "muscled through" by congressmen who wanted to weaken labor. True, the coalition that put over the law was a mixed bag. Remember, however, that the basic provisions and principles of the law were first proposed by the American Civil Liberties Union. By now, however—after thirty-nine years—those motives and politics are as irrelevant as the mixed motives of those who muscled through the U.S. Constitution more than two hundred years ago. The law has not weakened the labor movement. It has strengthened the labor movement by strengthening union democracy.

Fraser seems to think that he is defending the labor movement when he writes, "This structural dynamic of American trade unionism accounts, in part at least, for why the crusade for union democracy seems interminable and interminably futile. The Association for Union Democracy, for example, has been waging the good fight for a half century; although there have been some highs, and especially some very grim lows [*I'm not sure which those were—HB*], in the end it would be hard to argue much has changed over that span."

If true, this would be the worst news about labor we've heard in a long time. Does he really think that if those who strive for social justice and democracy in society are convinced by that dismal message they will flock with enthusiasm to the labor banner? But it is not true, it is totally false.

In the last forty years, there has been a proliferation of organized reform and insurgent activity throughout the labor movement. Victories in the Miners union and the Teamsters changed the balance of power in the labor movement. Sweeney and his colleagues did not create that movement for democracy and reform; they rode it into power.

No, the "crusade" for union democracy is not "futile," but one must yield to Fraser on one decisive point: it probably is "interminable." This qualilty, however, it shares with all crusades for democracy, decency, and social justice in society which, despite all progress, do seem interminable at least until the achievement of Utopia. Christian churches have been crusading for the brotherhood of man for two thousand years; but we still face Bosnia and Rwanda and the Holocaust. On a far more modest scale, *Dissent* has been crusading intellectually for social justice even longer than the Association for Union Democracy, but injustice remains.

Fraser employs the same kind of reasoning and exhibits the same condescension toward union democracy that led the old "house intellectuals," in pre-Sweeney days, to justify the bureaucratic practices of the old labor establishment. These intellectuals pleased labor leaders but lost credibility in the larger public and thereby dissipated even their own value to the labor movement.

It would be ironic if our new generation of intellectuals, in search of social justice, felt impelled by the needs of the "alliance" to serve our new labor leaders in the same spirit as the old. The founders of SAWSJ enjoy credibility and can inspire a new cadre of union activists because they are independent-minded and critical commentators. Meanwhile, there are good union loyalists who strive for more justice and democracy within the labor movment to make it more effective in the quest for democracy and justice in the nation. They deserve credit and recognition. It would be a sad day if the new labor-intellectual alliance began by belittling their efforts. ●

Herman Benson is the founder of the Association for Union Democracy and was its executive director for twenty years.

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Gordon K. Haskell

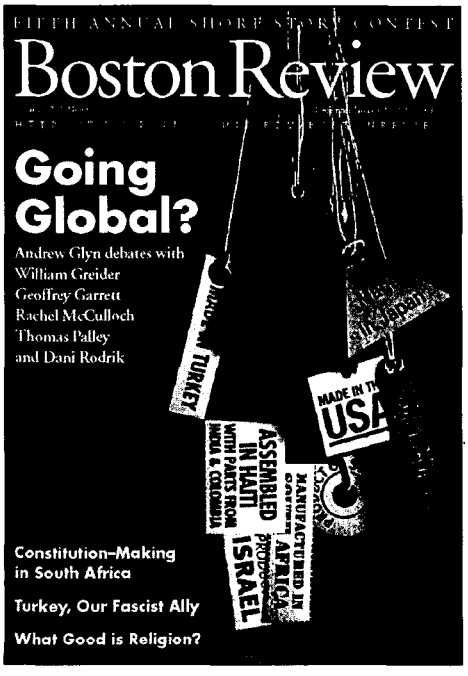
STEVE FRASER'S article renders me virtually (but not totally) speechless. He doesn't claim, directly, that democracy, as a general system of governance, is *bad* for unions. Had he done so, it might be easier to have a clear discussion. Although he makes a number of points worth thinking about, they are buried in and surrounded by a turgid swirl of irrelevancies and non sequiturs, all of which give the impression that it is possible, or even probable, that in many instances unions would be better off with less rather than more democracy.

Nowhere does Fraser suggest what alternative system of governance he thinks would be more likely to produce strong and effective unions: kleptocracy? gerontocracy? patriarchy? cronyism? rule by a family? All of them have been tried in the American labor movement, and more than once. But no, he's not for anything so clear-cut.

And that's because Fraser presents leadership and democracy as incompatible values. Your choice is between democracy, as rule of the mob; and rule by wise, dedicated, professional autocrats. The idea of strong, responsible, duly elected and replaceable officers vanishes in between.

Fraser portrays the struggle for union democracy as somehow unworthy or irrelevant because it has gone on for a long time, and shows no sign of ending in a decisive and final victory (like, "comes the revolution. . ."). How about the struggle for democracy in society at large? Where is the light at the end of the tunnel?

And he belittles it by implying that those who fight the good fight have a narrow, technical fixation on picayune procedural issues, while the real leaders (those in office) deal with big-size, major problems of power in so-



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ciety. In forty years of involvement with union democracy struggles, I have observed a number of fights over turf; some by people of factions primarily interested in bellying up to the trough; and even a few fanatical "rank-and-file" nuts. But overwhelmingly, the men and women who were thrown out of union halls; blacklisted on the job; barred from running for office; or beaten up in back alleys were hardly fixated on the niceties of parliamentary procedure. They were determined to make their union an effective instrument of social struggle, a defender of the dignity and livelihood of its members.

Finally, and this is what rendered me almost speechless, Fraser makes the stunning point that democracy does not always assure good leadership; that the ranks may, at times, prefer crooks to honest and capable folks. Really? I guess we should have given up on democracy in America when the people elected Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan to office! And this I have to read in *Dissent*! ●

GORDON HASKELL was the first president of the Association for Union Democracy. He has been active in union and political struggles for sixty years. He was recently honored (together with his wife, Rachel) as "Democrat of the Year" in Santa Cruz County, California.

Steve Fraser Replies

STANLEY ARONOWITZ, Herman Benson, and Gordon Haskell adopt an essentially similar approach in disapproving of my article on union democracy. It's an old, if not particularly venerable one, which runs as follows: "If you don't like the message, shoot the messenger." My article tried to grapple with a wide range of reasons to explain why the quest for union democracy, on its face an unexceptionable crusade, turns out to be a highly complicated matter after all. I won't rehearse those reasons here; dedicated readers can refer back to the original essay. But very briefly and selectively, they include: (1) the unique legacy created by the peculiar political and institutional history of the U.S. labor movement; (2) the more recent degeneration of American political practice into a form of high-priced, sound-bite mass maniputaion; (3) the long-lived and ignoble practice of union democracy as a form of exclusion by local majorities defined by race or gender or nativity—union democracy as democracy of the *volk*; (4) the periodic and cynical deployment of union democracy to conceal the ulterior motives of committed enemies of the labor movement and working people more generally; (5) the too easy conflation of democracy with militancy; (6) the problematical role of the government in policing internal union affairs. And there are more.

My respondents, however, rather than wrestle with these questions, have chosen instead to wish them into oblivion by impugning my motives. Each of them insinuates that in some not precisely defined way—perhaps psychologically, perhaps politically, or, who's to say, perhaps even in some seamier sense—I am dependent upon or owe some putative allegiance to the official leadership of the labor movement. Although these insinuations are gratuitous, offered without a scintilla of evidence, and are rather slyly stated at that, they do function to deflect the discussion away from the conundrums posed by the article. This of course is not a good way to carry on serious conversation. And in the particular case of Herman Benson, for whose decades of effort I have the greatest respect, I think it unworthy.

ALTHOUGH all of the responses aim at sketching my profile as a lapsed democrat, there are some remarks in Benson's piece that need clearing up. He claims I "distrust" union democracy. But oddly, the examples he alludes to—my treatments of Walter Reuther, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Carey debacle—do not represent the "defects" of union democracy, as he characterizes them, but glaring instances of the lack of democracy. My point here was that among the many perplexing realities that confound the issue of union democracy are the undeniable accomplish-

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ments—arguably accomplishments that significantly furthered the cause of democracy in America—of people and institutions that nonetheless must be faulted for serious departures from democratic practice. Benson is even harsher when I dare to report on another unpleasant reality; namely, that there are contemporary union leaders of otherwise considerable talent and great dedication who also display a studied indifference to the cause of union democracy. Recording this observation in language Benson finds too salty is tantamount, in his eyes, to justifying repression. Shoot the messenger, by all means. The same impulse surfaces again when he talks about my references to the Landrum Griffin Act. My article did not discuss the provisions of the act that do indeed include protections for the democratic rights of union members. I probably should have discussed them, but I didn't. But Benson goes on to imply that therefore I must oppose them, and in this way he can also avoid the point I was making. I briefly examined the origins of this legislation to illustrate that union democracy has sometimes functioned as a rubric under which the sworn enemies of the labor movement have assembled. They are doing so again today. In the real world, that actually matters and must weigh in strategic deliberations about what to do.

Benson finds my article depressing. I regret that. Developments during the last few years inside the labor movement are, on the contrary, enormously encouraging, especially after such a protracted period when it seemed walled off from its own natural constituencies and potential allies. Moreover, I applaud the struggle of the Association for Union Democracy and take courage from its victories. Benson says I've undercounted the latter. Stanley Aronowitz would seem to disagree. The truth is no doubt somewhere in between. But it would be Pollyannaish in the extreme to ignore the ongoing and dismal record of corruptions and repressions and exclusions that continue to mar the labor movement. Only by probing more deeply can we hope to improve on this record in the future. That was one of my purposes in writing the article.

Benson believes (and here Gordon Haskell would concur) that I have "belittled" the struggle for union democracy. Since my article opens by noting the heroic efforts of Teamsters for a Democratic Union, elswhere notes the protracted struggle to unseat the old McDonald Steelworkers gang, and in general sharply contrasts the motives of progressive-minded, rank-and-file warriors for union democracy from the motives of those faux union democrats from the corporate and conservative worlds, I'm not sure why he and Haskell think I've "belittled" anybody. I certainly did not intend any such belittlement. But again, I must insist that the issues raised in my article won't go away because we wish them to or decide not to talk about them. For my three critics (and, as Benson notes, for Arthur Schlesinger as well) the discussion ends with a simple affirmation of faith in union democracy. For me, however, I'm afraid that's where the discussion begins. ●

STEVE FRASER is the author of *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* and is co-editor of *Audacious Democracy: Labor, Intellectuals and the Social Transformation of America.*

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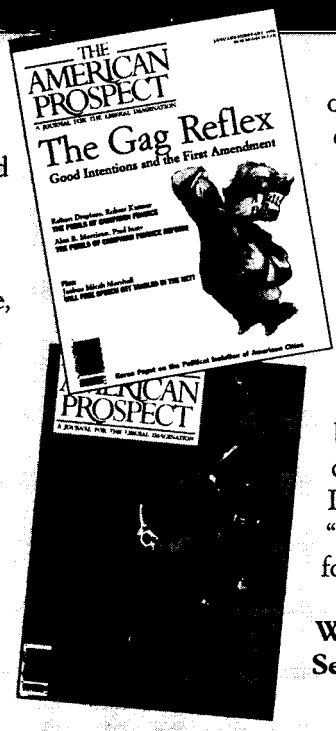

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Art and Anxiety in Los Angeles

Elitism at the Getty

Jon Wiener

Six months after opening, the Getty Center, the $1 billion mountaintop museum that has become Los Angeles's biggest cultural attraction, started running newspaper ads asking people not to come. Featuring a dozen happy kids from different races, the ads were headlined "It's a full house." They recommended that readers "check out L.A.'s other cultural attractions." This came after a feverish outreach campaign aimed at L.A.'s minority and immigrant communities, with banners throughout the city proclaiming the new building to be "*YOUR* Getty." This anxious effort had sought to persuade critics that the Getty was not, repeat not, an "elitist" institution.

The Getty outreach campaign is part of a major effort by museums throughout the country to attract a bigger and more diverse audience—the art world's strategy for combating attacks by Jesse Helms and others on public funding for the arts. If more ordinary voters believe that the museums are theirs, the demagogic campaigns to defund the National Endowment for the Arts and public art will be easier to defeat.

The Getty's efforts stand in contrast to two other museums in L.A. that have undertaken notable initiatives in recent months: the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which has shown challenging contemporary art that drew big crowds, and the Armand Hammer Museum of UCLA, which recently ran a pathetically ingratiating show of sketches of Disneyland. These different approaches reveal a great deal about the American art museum today.

The underlying problem at the Getty—"it's a full house"—is not that its outreach has been so good, but rather that its site is so bad. The problem stems from the original decision to build on a site that is virtually inaccessible. There's no way for visitors to get up the mountain to the museum except on the Getty's little three-car tram. The result has been immensely long lines of people waiting for the tram. On weekends visitors have faced a one-hour wait just to get on the tram for the three-minute ride to the museum, and the museum recently announced it no longer will admit everyone who arrives at the front door. Those who don't have a parking reservation, who take the bus instead of driving, will be denied admission if the tram line is too long. That's a harsh and humiliating reversal of the policy announced with great fanfare before opening day, when the museum responded to critics of its limited parking by inviting folks to take the Bundy Drive bus to the museum's tram station.

With a $6 billion endowment, the Getty doesn't need to fear Jesse Helms. Nevertheless, the institution is just as eager as government-funded museums to avoid charges of elitism. The decision made a decade ago to move the Getty's main collection from its original site near Malibu to the Brentwood mountaintop was explained by officials as a way of getting "closer to the people." That wasn't completely convincing, because Brentwood is best known as the onetime home of the man Senator Bulworth calls "that former running back who stabbed his wife," rather than a place ordinary folks live. The Getty could have built somewhere in the flats of L.A., on a site served by public transportation, with adequate parking and no tram system, and ordinary folks could have come without a reservation, whenever and as often as they felt like it, the way people go to the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Why then did the Getty board pick a site that was bound to provoke charges of elitism?

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The Getty has a dirty little secret: it lacks confidence that the public is interested in seeing the museum's collections. They include several world-class departments: decorative arts, miniatures, nineteenth-century photographs. But the audience for this work is small; it might be called "elitist." Most of the museum's paintings are not the kind people are eager to look at—the Getty doesn't have much Impressionist art. As a result, the Getty people felt they had to make the museum site itself a destination—someplace people would want to visit even if they didn't find the art very interesting. The Getty could have spent its money improving its painting collection, and then putting it in a more ordinary site. Instead it adopted the opposite strategy: build on a site that would itself be stirring, beautiful, memorable.

In this, architect Richard Meier largely succeeded. It's exhilarating to reach the mountaintop and gaze out from the gardens and plazas at the curving coastline on one side and the immense city stretching to the horizon on the other—if you can get a parking reservation, and if you aren't too embittered or exhausted by the wait for the tram.

The underlying problem is the Getty's outreach strategy. Instead of promising the public great art, it promises—and delivers—a thrilling site. It worked, and now the elitist institution that loudly proclaimed ordinary folks were welcome has ended up telling them to go elsewhere.

THE OTHER L.A. museum built on the fortune of an oil tycoon, UCLA's Armand Hammer Museum in Westwood, has adopted a different strategy of dealing with anxiety over elitism—one that can only be called pandering. Its summer show, "Designing the Disney Theme Parks," consisted of Disney artists' drawings and sketches of the world's Disneylands. In addition to architects' sketches of different versions of Sleeping Beauty's Castle, visitors were offered a variety of stuff, including a mechanical bird labeled "Audio-Animatronics® Tiki Bird/ Adventureland, Disneyland, Anaheim, California/ Brass with compressed-air mechanism, fabric and feathers, 1963/ Walt Disney Imagineering Collection." Also on display was a window from the set of Disney's 1958 *Zorro* television show and a set of Toontown music boxes.

It might be possible to mount a serious exhibit about Disney theme parks, but this wasn't it. There was no independent thinking here, no critical distance; neither of the two currently contending schools of critical theory was represented: not the ironic pomo enthusiasm for pop, nor the Adorno-esque condemnation of cultural decline. Instead this show celebrated Walt's genius and love of America and dedication to good clean fun, and it nervously declared that today's Disney corporate bigwigs are carrying on the vision of their founder. Telling Michael Eisner what he wants to hear is undoubtedly a good fund-raising strategy, but as the basis for an art exhibit it leaves something to be desired.

It's no surprise than an exhibit of official documentation of Disney theme parks would parrot the current corporate P.R. The Walt Disney Company is notorious for not allowing any reproduction of images of any Disney characters or sites without pre-publication screening of all accompanying text. Writers who fail to satisfy the Disney censors are denied permission to illustrate their work with any copyrighted material, and every inch of every Disney theme park is copyrighted. (Thus Michael Sorkin illustrated his critique of Disneyland [*Variations on a Theme Park*] with his own snapshot of the sky over the park, the only view he was allowed to reproduce.)

The Disney show was curated by Karal Ann Marling, a prolific art historian at the University of Minnesota, and organized by the Canadian Centre for Architecture, with what the catalogue calls "the extraordinary co-operation of Walt Disney Imagineering, Walt Disney Attractions, and The Walt Disney Company." No kidding. It ran at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in winter 1998, where director Kathy Halbreich put her own picture next to Walt's on the exhibit brochure. Henry Hopkins, director of UCLA's Hammer Museum, did not put his picture in the Hammer brochure. (The show reached the Cooper-Hewitt in New York last October.)

The problem with an art museum doing this kind of show is that Disney is already cel-

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ebrated everywhere. McDonald's gives away Disney figurines with its Happy Meals, Disney stores sell Disney stuff at shopping malls across America, cable TV has an entire channel devoted to Disney. An art museum ought to be a place where people can get away for an hour or two from this world of corporate and commercial images, where they can experience something unfamiliar or challenging or mysterious or maybe even beautiful, or maybe a place where they could confront something confusing or difficult. But the sense in this show is one of surrender: you didn't like Serrano's *Piss Christ*? No problem; we'll give you Sleeping Beauty's Castle. Jesse Helms should love this exhibit; the rest of us can only worry about the pandering that makes an art museum part of the wonderful world of Disney.

THE LOS ANGELES County Museum of Art (LACMA) provides a bracing counterexample. Its exhibit of video art by Bill Viola last spring presented work that doesn't pander to anyone. Yet it attracted huge crowds. The County Museum is a public institution: its budget comes from the L.A. County Board of Supervisors, not exactly the most enlightened art patrons, and as a public institution LACMA has a clear obligation to serve the taxpayers of the county. Their Bill Viola retrospective, curated by Howard Fox, showed the contemporary art museum at its best.

The Viola show was the largest installation of video work in any museum in the world. It offered a twenty-five-year retrospective of the first video artist chosen to represent the United States at the Venice Biennale (1995), a winner of a MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant. Viola's work qualifies as "difficult." He shows elemental images like people sleeping or floating in water, which he complicates with extreme slow motion, multiple and layered screens, and reflections in mirrors, all accompanied by discordant sound.

In the first gallery, a huge panel rotated on a pole in the middle of a dark room; one side was a screen displaying confusing video images—a carousel, a house on fire, a huge face—projected from the opposite wall. When the panel rotated, the other side was a mirror that reflected the viewers in the room in the harsh light of the video projector. Startled viewers watched their own reflections appear and disappear among shifting video images of youth and age and destruction.

In the next room a large video monitor showed a drop of water forming in huge close-up. Eventually the drop fell and a drum made a startlingly loud amplified boom. Part of the delight of this piece was figuring out what was going on. Visitors quietly explained to each other that this was a "live" video. On one side of the room a small video camera focused on a valve dripping water, while the amplified drum waited below it. It took about a minute for each drop to form and fall—a minute that was first puzzling, then exhilarating.

The museum's outreach effort around the Bill Viola show extended not just to banners and billboards around town; in a bold move, parts of the show were installed by Viola in big public places: the main library downtown, the Grand Central Market in the heart of the downtown Mexican shopping district. The piece in the market was the most famous one. A giant screen stood in the middle of a huge dark room (the market's cavernous basement); one side of the screen showed a standing man gradually deluged in water, while the other showed the same man slowly engulfed in fire. Both were accompanied by roaring soundtracks. Moving this piece out of the museum was a genuinely anti-elitist move. Everyone going to the rest rooms in the Grand Central Market had a chance to pause and look.

It may not be surprising that the County Museum would organize a big Bill Viola show, but it was surprising to see lots of ordinary Angelinos standing in a long line to get in. On the last weekend of the exhibition the line extended out the door of the gallery, through the museum courtyard, and down Wilshire Boulevard. It was a young crowd. College-age students had brought their friends, parents had brought little kids, couples seemed to be on dates. No doubt the video medium was part of the attraction, but this was not a show of Disney cartoons; this was the real thing. And LACMA presented Viola's work without wall text, without any explanation—which made its popularity all the more remarkable.

The curators at LACMA thus were right

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to think that the lives of ordinary people could be enriched by an afternoon of looking at art that was difficult and challenging and then moving and thrilling. The LACMA curators are part of a cohort that believe, in the words of Arthur Danto, that "the arts they administer are of vital concern to everybody, and that as many as possible should benefit from experiencing them."

As for the Disney show, there was one good thing about the Hammer's effort to purvey these commercial and syrupy images: it didn't seem to work. When I visited the Hammer on a week night, the Disney show was empty. One other visitor shared the gallery with me, along with three bored guards. Earlier this year, when I visited the show in Minneapolis on a Sunday afternoon, the attendance was only slightly better.

Comment books at museums are usually filled with bland clichés from middlebrow museumgoers, comments of the "thank you so much" school. The Disney exhibit comment books in Minneapolis were different. The Walker curators didn't simply provide space for comments; the book had self-serving prompts like "What did you learn about American popular culture from this exhibit?" Ninety percent of the comments were negative, the most frequent being "I don't care" and "boring." Maybe that's why the Los Angeles venue has dispensed with the comment books. And maybe there is hope for art in America after all. ●

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Morris Dickstein

Bonnard at the Modern

As NEW YORK's museums have come to rely on mounting blockbuster exhibitions, the museum going public has grown inured to them. The Impressionists, the great modernists like Picasso and Matisse, and a few postwar New York painters will always draw a crowd, but these shows provide occasions to revisit the familiar and see widely scattered works brought together. Sometimes they are little more than tourist packages aimed at the box office. At their best, however, they reconfigure an artist's work into a superbly illustrated visual essay. The big Mondrian exhibition two years ago was a revelation, shedding new light on how his art developed. But did we really need a big show focused on Picasso's portraits? If Picasso is a vast continent, it has by now been thoroughly mapped and explored.

Nothing was predictable for the crowds that jammed the Bonnard retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) this summer. Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947) was hardly a favorite of American collectors. He never fit easily into any narrative of modern art, yet he influenced painters as different as Fairfield Porter and Mark Rothko. His name did not even appear in some standard texts, such as H.W. Janson's 1962 *History of Art*. The two previous surveys of his work at MoMA (in 1948 and 1964) are but a dim memory; they were put together at a time when he was widely seen as a belated Impressionist, an artist clinging to techniques that were dated by the turn of the century, or as a minor modernist, not as bold as Matisse in his use of color or as daring as the Cubists in his break with nature and figuration. (Picasso himself told Françoise Gilot that Bonnard was "not really a modern painter. . . . just another neo-impressionist, a decadent; the end of an old idea, not the beginning of a new one.") As long as abstraction remained the cardinal tenet of modernism, Bonnard's art could not be fully appreciated or even understood.

Part of the scandal of Bonnard's paintings

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is the pleasure they give. There was a palpable sense of enjoyment at the Bonnard show. Visitors were enthralled by it; one painter I met was there for the fourth time. In his review of the 1948 MoMA retrospective, Clement Greenberg defended his more severe view of art against the seduction he acutely felt. "Bonnard is almost a major painter, but not quite," he wrote. "Sensuousness, paint quality, color, and an original approach to composition are all present; also taste and erudition. But some final intensity is missing." The pictures, he complained, "seduce us with their luxury, the paradoxical ease and measure of their shallow and airless depths."

For most viewers, Bonnard's color is the key to his sensuous appeal. After he saw a huge exhibition of Japanese woodblock prints and illustrated books in 1890, Bonnard realized "that color could express everything . . . with no need for relief or texture." He discovered that "color has just as strong a logic as form." Typically, Bonnard relies on color rather than line to give shape and texture to objects. But where the Impressionists, with their love of open-air settings and leisure activities, captivate us with their rich palette, Bonnard deploys color more independently, creating an enigmatic surface that draws you back to the painting again and again. This surface is "made up of a myriad of small touches which defy pigmentary analysis in their complexity," in the words of Nicholas Watkins. Picasso called it "a potpourri of indecision" and compared it unfavorably to the color in Matisse and van Gogh, who he felt were far less subservient to nature.

Bonnard's nudes display little of the lushness of the skin tones of Renoir's women. His *Large Blue Nude* of 1924 and especially his *Large Yellow Nude* of 1931 are almost monochromatic. In the latter, only a slight deepening and darkening of the skin sets off the yellow figure from the rich yellow walls and floor that surround her. Figure and ground form a continuum along the flat surface of the canvas. The eerily lit scene is domestic, private, and stylized, with objects in the room barely sketched in except as interruptions of the dominant yellow tones. Despite Picasso's complaint about Bonnard's failure to transcend

Self-Portrait in a Mirror, 1938. Private collection. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

nature, his use of color is boldly expressive, not at all naturalistic.

In line with his emphasis on color and on the flatness of the picture plane, Bonnard's draughtsmanship is often deliberately crude, primitive. His figures can be highly simplified, even childish, and his compositions often seem as casual as an amateur snapshot. Parts of figures—hands, legs—intrude into the edge of the frame as if the image were badly cropped or carelessly assembled. He violates the laws of perspective as deliberately, though not as obtrusively, as the Cubists. In the 1890s Bonnard belonged to a group of young painters who called themselves Nabis, after the Hebrew word for prophets; they worshipped Gauguin, and especially admired how he, like the Japanese, distributed blocks of color across a flat surface. Bonnard's fellow Nabi Maurice Denis remarked: "Remember that a painting—before being a battle horse, a nude woman or some anecdote—is essentially a flat surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order."

The Nabis' aim was to make painting more decorative, less formal and easel-bound, more intimately linked to daily life. The MoMA show included a few of the best examples of Bonnard's early imitations of Gauguin, such as *Intimacy* (1891) and *The Croquet Game* (1892), but Bonnard's work did not come into its own until after 1893, when he began a strange love affair with a woman who called

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herself Marthe de Meligny. Over the next fifty years she would be his mistress, his muse, his jailer, his sick and reclusive charge, and his endlessly rediscovered model and inspiration. (She appears in some 384 of his paintings.) Her presence in this show begins with the provocative erotic poses in *Indolence* and *Siesta* and the postcoital sadness of *Man and Woman* in which we see two naked lovers separated by a screen. In the background she sits on the bed pensively, almost withdrawn, while he stands in the foreground, turning away; they seem to be on different planets, or at least in different paintings. This bifocal pattern would recur more starkly in Bonnard's later work.

As some details of their extremely private relationship have become known over the past thirty years, bits and pieces of drama have attached themselves to the mysterious imagery of Bonnard's late paintings, especially those of Marthe in the bathroom or in the bath itself. At MoMA, viewers were drawn back not only by the visual surface of Bonnard's paintings but by a perceptible shadow of the life histories behind them. Plagued by ill health, increasingly fearful and suspicious, Marthe spent hours each day washing and soaking in the tub. And as the bathroom became the center of her world, it also became the scene of Bonnard's claustral, frighteningly intimate, yet also curiously detached vision of her. In his early paintings Bonnard had often portrayed Marthe in poses out of classical sculpture; in the bath pictures she becomes an ageless but delicate figure within a tomblike sarcophagus, evoking at once a memory of intimacy and an intimation of mortality.

Unlike the London version of this exhibit, which unfolded chronologically, the curators at MoMA hung Bonnard's later paintings by subject—landscapes, nudes, bath paintings, self-portraits—heightening the obsessive, biographical elements of the story. As Marthe developed an intense aversion to other people, their life together grew more confined, even reclusive, and his work began to focus on a few motifs—the dining room, the bathroom, the table overlooking the garden, the rooftops of the town they lived in. Their confined life purified his work down to a few essential experiments in representation. During World War I Bonnard had gone through an artistic crisis that would inaugurate the major phase of his career. Seeking a new approach to form, he began drawing intensively as he questioned his old intoxication with color. The severe limitations of his life with Marthe became the workshop, the crucible, in which he explored certain "adventures of the optic nerve," as he called them. By highlighting these problems of perception, with their fascinating repetitions and variations, the MoMA show became a visual essay on Bonnard's modernity, as if in response to Greenberg's charge that "some final intensity is missing" from his work. The bath pictures of Marthe and the harrowing self-portraits that follow are nothing if not an intense final vision.

All his life Bonnard had been preparing the tools and the visual language that would enable him to look squarely at his own physical decline. No modern novel could be more preoccupied with point of view than Bonnard's canvases. Even Greenberg noted shrewdly that "Bonnard's limp, deliberately 'accidental' composition is reponsible for some of his best effects." There is never any narrative occasion in Bonnard's later paintings; the major drama is not anecdotal but in how he apportions the surface of the canvas, making the human presence peripheral to the window on the garden, the bowl of fruit on the table, the pattern or color of the tablecloth, often tilted upward toward the flat picture plane. Sometimes the figures around the table are barely sketched in, as if caught in a fugitive glimpse. Even in the bath pictures, Marthe's watery figure has a dissolving presence, reflecting the vivid color and light of the surrounding tiles. This interior light, with its eerie color patterns, creates an unearthly, visionary effect, more like a mosaic than a painting. Rather than rejecting abstraction, Bonnard meets it halfway, appending his human subjects to a strong formal pattern.

Bonnard's experiments with perception can best be seen in his play with mirrors, with the surfaces of tables, or in his repeated juxtaposition of indoor and outdoor scenes. Instead of accepting the fiction that a painter can actually observe himself, Bonnard situates his

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Man and Woman, 1900. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

self-portraits in the viewpoint of someone examining himself in a bathroom mirror, complete with shaving equipment in the foreground. With his face in shadow, his eyes like vacant apertures on eternity, he is a man wryly assimilating his own cadaverous appearance, his impending nonbeing.

Much earlier, in canvases like *The Bathroom Mirror* (1908), *The Mantelpiece* (1916), and the *The Café 'Au Petit Poucet'* (1928), Bonnard had used mirrors as a way of partitioning the picture plane to show the complexity of our visual field. In *The Bathroom Mirror*, the washstand with its rounded pitcher and bowl dominates the foreground, but the mirror image hangs above it like a video screen or a painting within a painting. In *The Mantelpiece* this becomes even more complex: behind the nude in the mirror, seated with her head thrust back, we see a painted nude by his friend Maurice Denis, highly stylized and stretched out at full length, in exactly the posture Bonnard would later use for the bath images. The mantelpiece becomes an altarpiece consecrated to these contrasting images. The tricky café painting sets the "real" interior space of the café, on the left, alongside the outdoor tables and sketchy figures reflected in the plate-glass window. Vertical separations turn the painting into a kind of triptych. In this almost medieval fashion, Bonnard anticipated the proliferation of images in our media culture, the quick transitions and dizzying contrasts that fill up our visual field.

After these mirror paintings, Bonnard's favorite device for achieving this double vision was through his striking images of a window or doorway looking out onto a bit of landscape. He loves juxtaposing the indoor and outdoor worlds, with their sharply diverging color, light, and density of detail. As if he were analyzing the stages of modern art in a single canvas, Bonnard will bring together a geometrical interior, dominated by the panels of a door, the frame of the window, the shape of a table, with a piece of Impressionist landscape that is simply a riot of light and color.

Far from emphasizing perspective or depth, Bonnard will pull these elements right up to the picture plane, as he does in such masterful works as *The Dining Room in the Country* (1913), *The Open Window (1921)*, and *Door Opening onto the Garden* (1924). In the first of these paintings, a milestone in Bonnard's work, there is still a naturalistic sense of indoors and outdoors, but the later ones are more like color-field paintings, subsuming realistic details into color-saturated elements of an abstract pattern. In *The Open Window* and *Door Opening onto the Garden*, we small daubs of color that represent a highly stylized landscape, surrounded by large interior panels, with their contrasting colors and contours, that frame the landscape with angular, abstract, man-made forms. The ostensible subject simply becomes the occasion for an experiment in form and a typically modern investigation of color and vision.

Bonnard's tabletops became yet another motif through which he explored the impressive effects of pure color and shape, including the checkered red and white tablecloth in *Cof-*

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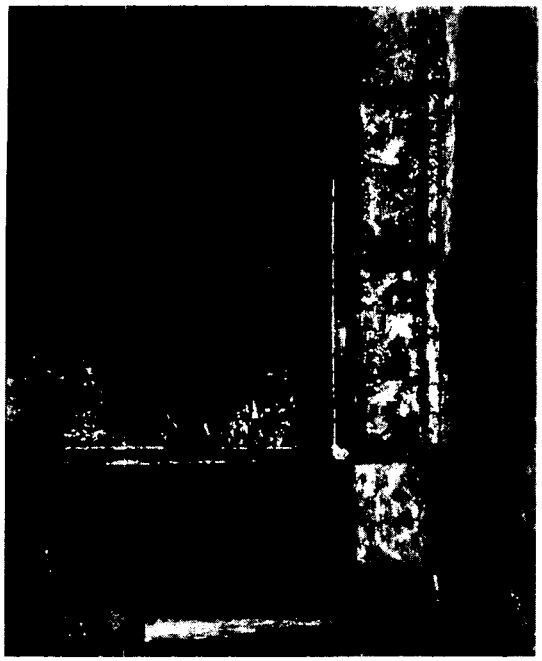

The Open Window, 1921. The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C., acquired 1930. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

fee (1915), which dominates the painting, despite the woman and dog sketched in beside it, and the brilliant white surfaces of *The Table* (1925) and *The White Tablecloth* (1926). Instead of forming a ground for the objects resting on them, these whites, which are blindingly intense, seem almost to hover above the surface as they link up with bolts of whiteness elsewhere in the work. In Bonnard's last painting, the great *Almond Tree in Blossom* (1946–1947), the white swatches of blossoms really do seem to lift off the canvas in great bursts, a perfect apotheosis of luminous white. Rather than lacking "some final intensity," Bonnard's colors make a tremendous demand on the viewer's eye as the painter interrogates the medium in which he works.

DESPITE Picasso's denial and Greenberg's misgivings, we can now see Bonnard as a thoroughly modern painter, a restless, original, and highly self-conscious artist. Nicholas Watkins's engrossing new book, *Interpreting Bonnard: Color and Light* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang), stresses his explorations of color and perception, while Timothy Hyman's fine *Bonnard* (Thomas and Hudson) emphasizes some of the obscure personal sources of his visual experiments. In the work of his last decades, the formal and the personal come together around the handful of subjects highlighted by the MoMA exhibition. He began as a painter of the urban scene, an observer of social life. Even as he withdrew to the country, as his world grew narrower, he used everyday life to probe the conditions of painting itself. This later Bonnard did not have the expansive talent for assimilating everything he saw, but rather a profound and ever-deepening grasp of the problems of visual perception.

As Marthe withdrew into her moist indoor world, he converted it into a scene of elemental beauty and sadness, a long farewell, just as he turned his late self-portraits into an unsparing meditation on his own physical decay. These too were bathroom images, with his head surrounded by the refracted color of the walls and tiles like some Byzantine icon. In one of them his eyes are almond-shaped pits of darkness. In another his face is in shadow, his head and upper body gaunt, stooped, and hairless—the look of a dying man. By ending the show with these images of Marthe submerged and Bonnard in decline, the museum provided a strong conclusion to what was at once the story of a life and the history of a creative adventure. Far from being a retrograde painter stuck with old techniques, Bonnard carved out a space between Impressionism and modernism, between the intimate portrayal of domestic subjects and the expressive potential of saturated color and abstract design. If this doesn't fit well into the standard chronicle of modern art, perhaps that account still needs to be revised. ●

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With Friends Like These

George Packer

SIR VIDIA'S SHADOW: A FRIENDSHIP ACROSS FIVE CONTINENTS
by Paul Theroux
Houghton Mifflin, 1998 368 pp $24

EX-FRIENDS: FALLING OUT WITH ALLEN GINSBERG, LIONEL & DIANA TRILLING, LILLIAN HELLMAN, HANNAH ARENDT, AND NORMAN MAILER
by Norman Podhoretz
The Free Press, 1999 256 pp $25

THESE REVENGES dressed up as memoirs are untrustworthy, not necessarily in the facts presented, but in the sense Orwell meant when he wrote, "Autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful." They suffer from the problems of tone and meaning that arise when books claim to be doing something other, and higher, than what they're really doing. They present themselves as dispassionately truthful remembrances. In fact, the spirit of rancor is so corrosive that it strips the glamour off the back of the most stubbornly glamorous literary fantasies: the writer as traveler and exile, the circle of New York Intellectuals. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to speak of betrayal in the ordinary sense. Because these two books call into question the very notion that literary friendship itself is possible, the real betrayal here is not of the subject-targets but the self.

Paul Theroux's account of his three decades as V.S. Naipaul's protégé has been made out to be a worse book than it actually is, and Theroux himself is to blame for this. He did himself a disservice by allowing the *New Yorker* to run a version before the book appeared that squeezed together the choicest slices of incriminating detail: Naipaul's contempt for Africans and white "infies," his cruel treatment of his long-suffering wife Pat, his affairs, his monumental prickliness, his cheapness, his second marriage to a domineering Pakistani woman—who apparently prevailed on him to cut Theroux off. The *New Yorker* beckoned and Theroux obliged with his nastiest gossip fodder. In doing so he violated one of the teacher's most important maxims: "The man must never precede the book!" In punishment, the book became the object of venom and rebuttal before it had even come out. And Theroux compounded the damage post-publication, in an exercise of blunt self-justification, by writing more Naipaulia for the *New York Times Book Review*, like a machine that can't be turned off.

But the first hundred pages of *Sir Vidia's Shadow* have some good descriptions of East African travel and of expatriate life in Uganda, where Theroux, age twenty-four, and Naipaul, a very old thirty-four, met at the university in Kampala in 1966. For Theroux, at the start of his career, encountering in that unlikely place this uncompromising, "almost unlovable," yet curious and intimate man, who encouraged him and then pronounced him a writer, was one of the "miracles" that Naipaul told him sometimes happen. These pages are vivid with the rush of youthful good luck, of guileless ambition and libido, in a landscape at once seductive and menacing.

Naipaul was free with literary advice of a grimly bracing sort, and his wintry aphorisms are perhaps the most valuable thing in the book. "Aim high. Tell the truth." "Don't use words for effect." "Every good book suggests that the writer, however painful its subject, has arrived at some inward peace about it, some inner resolution, even of anger and despair, even though this peace and resolution is purely temporary. So that you know where a man

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stands." "This faith [that you will be all right in the end] your friends cannot give you: it is something you have to discover in yourself." "The only consolation of the writing profession is that it is fair." "The greatest writing is a disturbing vision offered from a position of strength—aspire to that."

Naipaul leaves Africa, and eventually Theroux does too. There are letters exchanged across continents, reunions over dinner in London, and Theroux marries and has children and begins to publish his work, prolifically enough for Naipaul to cease giving advice and start expressing envy, and the two become neighbors again in the English countryside, and Naipaul's behavior grows insufferable, and Theroux spends three decades listening with a smile on his face, and something goes wrong with this book. Scene after scene—so much improbably remembered dialogue—with no apparent purpose. What started fresh has become dull, a transcription bent on exposure, like the Starr Report. The form of faithful recollection is more and more undermined by a tone of unacknowledged hostility in the choice of incidents. Theroux does not reflect on his material, because he cannot let himself reflect. If he were to reflect, he would have to admit something like this: "I am recording these scenes because for three decades I said nothing while this man reduced his wife to tears or insulted the waiter or spoke ill of children. I let him stick me with an expensive dinner bill and went home to my son without the storybook I'd promised to buy him. To stay in this man's good graces I flattered and lied. Even my obituary for his wife was dishonest. I was content to be Sir Vidia's shadow because his approval meant the world to me. And now that he has cut me off, I want revenge for the lifelong mark my teeth have left in my tongue."

The last few pages finally say as much. "Challenge him and he was an enemy; treat him handsomely and there was a chance he would be kind. Cherish him and he was yours. Hadn't I cherished him? So we had never quarreled." What a high price for this nettled attention. Once Theroux is "freed"—rejected, but not for having challenged Naipaul, for he never did—the resentment flows. Naipaul's later works, his whole literary project, his very soul, now come in for harsh review. "It is not virtue at all to be cruel in this way. It only implied a mean heart." Theroux is fifty-seven. It seems late for these recognitions. In a way it is late for Theroux the writer as well, for his own books owe something of their strain of sourness to the teacher's example (without the teacher's brilliant vision). Perhaps this literary style is as much a self-betrayal as sitting by while Naipaul condescended to Mrs. Theroux.

Over and over, with the ardor of a lover, Theroux speaks of Naipaul as his friend. "He is my friend, I thought. I have a friend. I was a part of his writing life now, and he was certainly part of mine." "This friendship I now realized was as strong as love. He was my friend, he had shown me what was good in my writing, he had drawn a line through anything that was false. I was inspired by his work and his conviction. I wanted always to be his friend." "By now we knew each other well and had arrived at that point at which friends realize they cannot know each other any better. His friendship was a pleasure and a relief." For three decades Theroux lived for Naipaul's praise, or even his presence, and received more of both than almost anyone; Naipaul in return enjoyed many favors done and was made to feel like a master. Both men made out well, and the end should have prompted profits-counting and not debt-collecting. Naipaul and Theroux were never friends.

FRIENDSHIP between writers is inherently unstable: the basis of friendship is also the source of rivalry. Writers make friends with other writers because they are writers, and immediately they are in competition. The strength of one diminishes the other. You see this in *Sir Vidia's Shadow*: Naipaul wanes whenever Theroux waxes. And literary friendship is sometimes a pretty phrase for what amounts to mutual use—so that when friends becomes ex-friends it is generally because the use has been used up.

Norman Podhoretz's new book provides an inadvertent guide to the pathology of literary relationships. As a sequel to *Making It* and *Breaking Ranks* (from which it exhumes long passages), *Ex-Friends* ought to have been called *Settling Scores*. Even more than

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Theroux, who buries his spite in the raw clay of narrative, Podhoretz's writing suffers from the clash of ostensible and true motives. This clash produces a characteristic tone, with its own roundabout syntax, a tone of high-minded insult, as when Podhoretz ("after a long debate with myself") turns down an invitation to Norman Mailer's seventy-fifth birthday party: "I had no wish to put myself in the false position of participating in the celebration of a career that had so bitterly disappointed my literary expectations."

With its bald confession of success worship, *Making It* brought down the contempt of almost everyone he admired on Podhoretz's head when it appeared in 1967. But revisited three decades on, and compared to *Ex-Friends*, it reads a little like the early passages in *Sir Vidia's Shadow*—almost winning in its frank hungers (maybe the problem with literary friendships is that writers get older). At one point in *Making It*, Podhoretz drew a nice distinction between pre-Freudian hypocrisy, which took the form of nobility—"the ascription of purer motives to oneself than one was actually acting upon"—and the Freudian kind, which took the form of honesty—"ascribing baser motives to oneself than one is in fact being driven by."

Between *Making It* and *Ex-Friends* Podhoretz has reverted from Freudian to pre-Freudian hypocrisy. We are supposed to believe that the new book examines "why it is so hard for friends who disagree about large and apparently impersonal subjects like politics or literature to remain friends." In other words, this is an account of friendships that ended over principle. Podhoretz says that he lost his famous friends—Ginsberg, the Trillings, Arendt, Hellman, and Mailer—because he lost his radical faith. Most of these were friends in the Naipaulian way, and in the case of the one exception, cause and effect seem more appropriately reversed: Podhoretz lost his radical faith because he lost his friend.

Ex-Friends gets the last self-justifying word into arguments with half a dozen people, all but one dead. Its lack of generosity and wisdom is almost astonishing. Allen Ginsberg, former Columbia literary pal, toward the end of his life tried to end their decades of mutual hatred, but Podhoretz rebuffed him in life and "still could not bring myself to forgive *him*, not even now that he was dead" for promoting drug use and sexual promiscuity. With Lillian Hellman, Podhoretz lied for years about his opinion of her writing and kept silent about his opinion of her politics so that he wouldn't lose his purchase on "the glamor and the glitter to which she offered easy access." Now, he says, "I remain proud of the part I went on to take in the fight against the political ideas and attitudes in whose service she corrupted her work and brought, as I now see it, lasting dishonor upon her name."

Diana Trilling was tolerated only because she was Lionel's wife. A footnote explaining how she called Podhoretz a liar for claiming in *Breaking Ranks* that Trilling had warned him not to publish *Making It* gives you an idea of the airless, joyless atmosphere of this third autobiography:

> One reason my wife was so angry was that she recalled a conversation during our trip together to Germany—a conversation at which Diana had been present and in the course of which Lionel repeated what he had previously told me *tête-à-tête* about publishing *Making It*. If my wife's memory was accurate, then Diana was simply lying, and not fantasizing when she accused *me* of lying about Lionel's advice. But I continued to give Diana the benefit of the doubt on this matter, because although I did remember a difficult conversation the four of us had in Germany about *Making It*, I did not recall Lionel's repeating his advice not to publish it. Which does not prove, I hasten to add, that my wife's memory was faulty.

PODHORETZ is one of the last survivors of what he calls the Family. Conceivably this is the last memoir we shall have from a blood member. If so, all the fierce battles of the New York Intellectuals, from Stalinism and the Pound award to Eichmann and Vietnam, shall have ended in this byzantine footnote. We shall be left with the Trillings and the Podhoretzes quarreling in Germany over a book, and then quarreling in another book over the first book, and then still quarreling over the second book in yet another

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book. If a book had a face, *Ex-Friends* would be thick-featured with dull wary eyes, its mouth ajar over some old wrong, the last idiot child of too much Family inbreeding.

But why did Podhoretz write it? After all, the material in *Ex-Friends* is not fresh. Some of it is as stale as hardtack. There is a quality of exhausted ideas, even intellectual deterioration, in its prose. Long passages quote or closely paraphrase without attribution Podhoretz's previous books (this was also the case with *Breaking Ranks*; and Theroux cannibalizes old articles in *Sir Vidia's Shadow*). Thus, in *Ex-Friends*:

> All [Trilling] ever did was allow me to publish one of the lectures he delivered at Harvard that were subsequently brought together in his book *Sincerity and Authenticity*. I featured it as a lead article even though it disappointed me in being so muffled in its attack on the idea of insanity as a species of rebellion against the spiritual oppressions of middle-class society. This idea had been from the beginning—in Allen Ginsberg's declaration that "the best minds" of his generation had been driven mad and in Norman Mailer's celebration of the psychopath (about which more later)—a central element of the new radicalism. It also figured in the work of serious thinkers like the psychologist R.D. Laing and in more popular form in a novel like Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which, as a measure of its by then mass appeal, was turned into a very successful movie. And it was, finally, an idea profoundly repugnant to Lionel. Yet he could only bring himself to an expression of this repugnance by a route so convoluted and difficult to follow that many readers were at a loss to figure out what he was trying to say.

And in *Breaking Ranks*:

> He allowed me to publish a section of *Sincerity and Authenticity* which I featured even though I found it characteristically muffled in its attack on the idea of insanity as a species of rebellion against the spiritual oppressions of middle-class society. This idea had been from the beginning (in Allen Ginsberg's declaration that the "best minds" of his generation had gone mad and in Norman Mailer's celebration of the psychopath) a central element of the new radicalism, and it still figured in the work of serious thinkers like the psychologist R.D. Laing and in more popular form in a novel like Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* which, as a measure of its by-then mass appeal, was subsequently turned into a very successful movie. It was also an idea profoundly repugnant to Trilling, and yet, as in the case of his Jefferson Lecture, he could only bring himself to an expression of this repugnance by a route so convoluted and difficult to follow that many readers were lost on the way.

The slight changes are baffling. *Making It* is similarly pilfered—with a twist. Near the end of the 1967 book this passage appears:

> Like most famous writers, [Mailer] was surrounded by courtiers and sycophants, but with this difference: he allowed them into his life not to flatter but to give his radically egalitarian imagination a constant workout. He had the true novelist's curiosity about people unlike himself—you could see him getting hooked ten times a night by strangers at a party—and his respect for modes of life other than his own was so great that it often led him into romanticizing people and things that might legitimately have been dismissed as uninteresting or mediocre. He would look into the empty eyes of some vapid upper-class girl and announce to her that she could be the madam of a Mexican whorehouse . . .

Thirty years later, here is what's become of the passage in *Ex-Friends*:

> Like many famous people, Mailer liked to surround himself with a crowd of courtiers, many of whom had nothing to recommend them that I could see other than their worshipful attitude toward him. A few of them I grew to like well enough. . . . But even in the company of these, Mailer was always at his worst, and with the other hangers-on, who came and went and sometimes stayed, he could be positively intolerable—posing, showing off, bumping heads (another of his favorite sports), bullying, ordering about, and, underneath it all, flattering.
>
> The flattering was especially in evidence with women, not only or even primarily as a means of seduction but mainly as a way of romanticizing and thereby inflating the sig-

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> nificance of everything that came into his life. He would inform some perfectly ordinary and uninteresting girl that she could have been a great madam running the best whorehouse in town . . .

If you're going to change your mind about a friend, at least you could find new prose for the occasion. To depend on an earlier passage for phrasing and observation while making small changes that give it, unacknowledged, an entirely different coloring, strikes me as deeply dishonest. It throws every other observation and interpretation into doubt. But this self-plagiarism also gives the writer away. Here we see contrasted as vividly as possible the generous, excitable, somewhat sycophantic Norman Podhoretz of 1967 and the dismissive, soured man he became. Decades of political combat have not had an elevating effect on the temperament of this former literary critic. And his change of mind about Mailer gives us a clue to why he would choose, nearing old age, to turn back and declare himself well rid of the friends of his youth.

Mailer is in many ways this book's exception, and its key. He is still alive; and unlike the other ex-friends, the quality of the other Norman's relationship with him appears to have been a real friendship. Lillian Hellman gave access to glamour and fun; Hannah Arendt's company lent intellectual distinction; Ginsberg was a rival and enemy almost from the start; Lionel Trilling was the teacher; Diana was the teacher's wearisome wife. They were all primarily useful, whereas the "existentialist" Mailer of the late fifties and sixties, with his radical ideas about sex and success, caught Podhoretz's imagination in an uncalculated way. Norman P., seven years younger, wanted to be more like Norman M. Knowing that he couldn't, he enjoyed Mailer's high-voltage companionship enormously.

Until 1967—when *Making It* appeared to denunciations from the Family, and Mailer, having expressed private approval to Podhoretz, wrote a good-tempered but ultimately critical review of the book for *Partisan Review*. Podhoretz felt betrayed—not in the lofty contest of ideas, but in the most humiliatingly personal way possible, kicked by a friend when he was down. And that was the beginning of the end for the Normans. Perhaps coincidentally, Podhoretz can't summon much admiration for any of Mailer's books since *The Armies of the Night*—which appeared around the same time as the piece in *Partisan Review*—and as for Mailer's criticism of *Making It*, Podhoretz elaborated a theory in *Breaking Ranks*, recycled in *Ex-Friends*, that Mailer couldn't bring himself to defy the verdict of the literary establishment (Trilling's disapproval of the book is given essentially the same account: he didn't have the stomach to fight the increasingly radical New York Intellectuals).

"I am reasonably sure," Podhoretz writes, in the syntax of pre-Freudian hypocrisy, "after conscientiously probing the region surrounding the lower depths of critical integrity, that not even a minor contribution has been made to my harsh judgment of [Mailer's] later work by a lingering resentment over his article on *Making It*." Maybe not—but it is clear that after the hurtful experience of 1967–1968 Podhoretz's cherished entry to Family gatherings lost a good deal of its pleasure. He did not become a neoconservative because *Making It* was rejected by his friends, but their rejection made the move less wrenching than it might have been. Nonetheless, it was a loss. His post-sixties politics made Podhoretz a pariah in the literary circles to which he had coveted admittance. As Ford Madox Ford said of his own divorce, it hurt him in his dinner invitations. No one should underestimate the price this exacted from the author of *Making It*. One would like to honor Podhoretz for what was, after all, a principled sacrifice, though this is made difficult by the fact that his sense of humor was lost along with his friends. And here perhaps we arrive at the real motive for digging up these old quarrels in *Ex-Friends*: Podhoretz wants to convince himself that the losses were worth it.

Just as Theroux's real feelings, shame and anger, erupt in the closing pages of his book, as Podhoretz says his last goodbye to his ex-friends the tone of high-minded insult collapses and he comes clean. "Conceivably, there are lively parties today to which I am not invited that are similar to the ones I used to go

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to and give," he speculates. "But if similar parties are being held today, I think rumors of them would have reached me, and so I can only conclude that they are as much a thing of the past as the intellectual life out of which they originally emerged." It's a comfort to think so anyway. And yet remembering Mailer et al. has left him unexpectedly nostalgic. He summoned these ghosts to get in the last word and ends up missing them. His posthumous wins have begun to seem hollow. By the last sentences the conflict between ostensible and true motives is utterly, almost movingly, apparent: "I owe my ex-friends a perverse debt. I was who I was in some part because of my friendship with them, and I am who I am in larger part because we ceased being friends. In all truth, I much prefer who I am to who I was. Nevertheless, I cannot help feeling nostalgic about the 'old days' when I was, in Norman Mailer's authoritative estimation, so much 'merrier' than I am now, and I cannot help missing the people I admired, liked, enjoyed, and even (in a few cases) loved when I was young and they, though not so young, were all at their best and still in their prime."

Or in the words of Joseph Conrad: "The pity of it is that there comes a time when *all* the fun of one's life must be looked for in the past."

These words are quoted in *Joseph Conrad, A Personal Remembrance* by Ford Madox Ford. The book is his *Sir Vidia's Shadow*; and *Portraits from Life* is his *Ex-Friends*. Ford collaborated with Conrad on three novels before falling out; he fell out with some of the subjects of his *Portraits*, including D.H. Lawrence, whom he had discovered. Yet the two books are suffused with a kind of critical warmth that makes every well-made sentence glow. Ford did not write out of a grievance; self-justification was not his motive. He knew what our memoirists have forgotten: justice demands that some things be omitted. He omitted the whole account of their rift from his book on Conrad. Quoting a letter in which Lawrence gives his first impression of Ford—"fairish, fat, about forty"—he omitted the next phrase: "and the kindest man on earth." Read his literary memoirs and you will see that age can bring generosity; that writers might not be able to remain good friends but in remembering can at least remain good writers; that outliving friends-turned-enemies gives you, along with the last word, a burden of trustworthy portraiture. ●

GEORGE PACKER's most recent novel, *Central Square* (Graywolf Press), was published last fall. *Blood of the Liberals* will appear in 2000.

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The One Left Standing

Harold Meyerson

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOCIALISM:
THE WEST EUROPEAN LEFT
IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
by Donald Sassoon
The New Press, 1997 965 pp $39.95 cloth, $22 paper

THE LITERATURE on communism, the Russian Revolution, and the Soviet Union fills libraries. It is the stuff of epics, filled with heroic sacrifices, tragic betrayals, vast calamities, unimaginable evil. The literature on social democracy is skimpier—understandably so. Its conflicts are not final but quotidian; its protagonists lack the sense of historic anointment that sent Bolshevik leaders charging across history's stage. The insurrectionary tradition could produce such hopelessly romantic icons as Che Guevara (all the more iconic for being so hopelessly romantic). As to the iconic potential of social democracy—well, let's just say that I went through the late sixties at Columbia, with numerous side trips to Berkeley, without ever once seeing a wall poster of Eduard Bernstein.

And yet, if any form of socialism is going to shape the next century, it is the reformist socialism that was developed and continually revised in western Europe. Though neoliberal capitalism is the ideology of the age, it is the socialists, confounding all prophecy, who head the governments in thirteen of the fifteen nations of the European Union. In London, Paris, Bonn, and Rome, socialist administrations try to fathom how to preserve the social democratic heritage at a transnational level. Across the continent, voters have entrusted the decisions on how exactly to cut back the welfare state almost exclusively to social-democratic ministers. Depending on how exactly you measure such things, twentieth-century Europe has never been more—or less—socialist.

It is this socialism—the only socialism that matters to any future endeavors to build a world not entirely in the image of the markets—that historian Donald Sassoon chronicles in this magisterial volume. *One Hundred Years of Socialism* is the first work of its kind. There have been numerous studies of the individual western European labor, socialist, communist, and social democratic parties; of this and that period or problem in social democracy; there have been biographies aplenty of socialist leaders. But until Sassoon came along, no one had attempted to write an authoritative history of the western European left and, accordingly, of social democracy—though social democracy has unarguably been one of the dominant forces shaping the century, and, somewhat more arguably, is one of only two global ideologies still standing at century's end.

It's easy to see why Sassoon hasn't had much competition. *One Hundred Years of Socialism* takes as its subject the major left parties in fourteen separate countries and the governments they formed or participated in during the course of the past century, not to mention the union movements, and more recently the environmental, feminist, and peace movements. The sheer volume of party platforms and programs, campaign speeches, movement manifestos, economic plans, journalistic accounts, ministerial memoirs, and dissident critiques—published, of course, in a multiplicity of tongues—would daunt all but the most obsessive of historians, and social democracy isn't one of those subjects to which obsessives tend to gravitate.

Yet plainly Sassoon remained undaunted. *One Hundred Years of Socialism* is a work of immense scholarship and, just as rare, sound historical judgment. If it is not, finally, a great

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history—more nearly, perhaps, a great reference book—the problem at least in part is that it mirrors the strengths and defects of the movement whose story it tells: it is unfailingly sober, relentlessly realistic, and a little dull. The narrative, like social democracy itself, is continually fragmented by national particularities. Good historian that he is, Sassoon is ever uncovering broader patterns in the hitherto discrete histories of left parties and governments—how the administrations of François Mitterrand and James Callaghan, say, ran smack into the same economic constraints; how the parties throughout Europe gradually absorbed the student leftists of the sixties. But the very authoritativeness of this account turns history's express train into a local: after we learn how the German and Scandinavian social democrats, the French and Italian socialists and communists, and the British Laborites each reacted to the challenge of the sixties left, we then visit the question yet again, in the Belgian context. *One Hundred Years of Socialism* pays for its virtues: it is a work as definitive as the *Oxford English Dictionary*—and, at times, with about as much narrative thrust.

BUT THERE is, of course, a broader narrative here, and when Belgian side-trips don't get in the way, Sassoon relates it in ultimately compelling fashion. It is the story of outcasts who organize themselves to overthrow capitalism as the century begins; who come to power in mid-century and, while abandoning the pretense of overthrowing capitalism, build thriving and humane societies throughout western Europe; and who, at century's end, see their handiwork at least partially dismantled—and are even compelled to take part in the dismantling themselves—as capitalism becomes global. It is a classic saga of rise and fall, and it ends with its somewhat dazed protagonists beginning to sketch new designs, transnational plans, for rebuilding the smashed edifice of social democracy. It is a saga that we may already know in its broadest strokes, but Sassoon makes it far clearer why the rise and—more important—why the fall.

In one sense, *One Hundred Years of Socialism* tells the story of one hundred years of revisionism. It could hardly be otherwise: nothing in classic socialist doctrine prepared socialists to exercise power. It wasn't just Marx who was mum on the topic. From 1882 to 1914, *Neue Zeit*, the journal of the German social democrats, ran exactly one story that dealt with what a socialist society would be like, what a socialist government should do.

There was no such silence as to what a socialist party should do, but there was a good deal of conflicting counsel. As promulgated by Karl Kautsky, the most influential socialist theorist in the years preceding World War I, one of the two central tasks of a socialist party was to wait for the revolutionary moment that would dump a transformed society into its lap. (It most certainly was not to hasten that moment through adventurous insurrections and the like.) The party's other task was to press for political and social reforms: full suffrage, equal rights for all, universal social rights (to health care, to education, to a unionized workplace), and legislated regulations of working conditions. What the connection was between task one—abolishing capitalism when the time was right—and task two—enacting those political and social reforms—was utterly unclear. When Kautsky's longtime collaborator, Eduard Bernstein, sought to dispell the confusion by propounding that task one was a chimera and task two was all that mattered, revisionism was born.

In the years between the two World Wars, it was Kautskyism rather than Bernsteinism that crippled the western European left. Sassoon diagnoses two distinct strains of misapplied orthodoxy. The first was peculiar to parties that fell prey to the cult of total transformation. For Weimar communists, Sassoon writes, "all issues were subsumed by the overarching belief that the road to revolution was an insurrectionary one. Thus, all one needed to decide was whether the time was ripe." The chief effect of this insular vigilance was to remove the communists from the broader forces of the left and the daily struggles to preserve the republic. With decreasing frequency, this tendency recurred across the decades; Sassoon last spots it among the Portuguese communists of the late seventies, still hoping for a left-military coup.

But the Kautsky Curse also struck more

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mainstream parties that were swept into power before capitalism was ready to fall. For such as Weimar's Social Democrats and Ramsey MacDonald's Labourites, who came to power in the pit of the Great Depression, "it was as if they felt History had somehow cheated them by giving them power prematurely, when they still had little idea of what should be done." At best, these interwar left governments expanded the welfare state and worker rights (Leon Blum in France); at worst, they followed deflationary orthodoxy that just made the depression worse (MacDonald in Britain). None of them except the Swedes crossed the Rubicon of actually attempting to direct their nation's capitalist economy—in the Swedes' case, with expansionist policies. The very idea of socialists trying to modify capitalism was as alien to proper Labourites as it was to scheming Bolshevists.

By the time parties of the Left returned to power at the conclusion of the Second World War, the equation of socialist power with the abolition of private capital was fast becoming a holy relic to be waved about on ceremonial occasions only. No left party had extensive plans for nationalizing the means of production. To the contrary, the parties' epochal achievement, in which Britain's Labour government led the way, was to create a universal welfare state within a capitalist economy. There were nationalizations here and there, but Sassoon faults Labour for nationalizing industries for political reasons only, with no strategic economic goal in mind. More national economic planning, he notes, was under way in such nonsocialist bastions as Japan's trade and industrial ministry and Jean Monnet's coal and steel union than in the offices of Europe's socialist governments.

This often insouciant absence of a long-term strategic perspective rankles Sassoon—who is a historian in, as well as of, the socialist tradition. At bottom, the socialists who presided over the great postwar boom assumed that capitalism, subjected to social democratic and Keynesian fine-tuning, would continue to produce the full employment that made the welfare state possible. Sassoon applauds the Swedes and the Austrians for consciously and consistently prodding their economies toward full employment. He is appalled when socialist parties and leaders leave economic restructuring to the market rather than modernize their economies themselves, or when, by clinging thoughtlessly to dogma, they exile themselves to political irrelevance.

Indeed, it is as a chronicler of socialist shortcomings that Sassoon most clearly finds his voice. His short takes on socialist leaders and parties are frequently devastating. Guy Mollet, who led the postwar French socialists in support of the Algerian intervention, and toward ultimate electoral oblivion, was a leader "without either the ethical dimensions of Leon Blum or the shrewdness of François Mitterrand." Of the intellectually calcified French Communist Party in the late seventies, around which Mitterrand was running circles in his successful attempt to build up his own *Parti socialiste*, Sassoon writes, "Seldom has the refusal to think become so distinguishing a characteristic of a political party."

The occasions when Sassoon feels compelled to praise are fewer, but no less heartfelt. Here is Italian Communist leader Enrico Berlinguer, endeavoring to recreate his party as a genuine social democratic alternative to Italy's Christian Democratic kleptocracy, defending social justice in a time of austerity: "Economic development based on a constant and artificial expansion of consumption, declared Berlinguer to the left-wing intellectuals assembled in Rome (most of whom appeared never to have neglected an opportunity to consume), was in direct conflict with the needs and exigencies of the Third World. . . . I wonder," Sassoon continues, "whether this diffident Sardinian haut bourgeois, whose integrity was doubted only by those who had none, was hopelessly out of touch with the vulgar and coarse society surrounding him, or whether he was simply too much in advance of his age."

This entire scene is, alas, the exception rather than the rule in *One Hundred Years*, which is an analytical history otherwise almost entirely devoid of scenes. Indeed, it is only when Sassoon turns to Italy, on which he is a specialist, that he depicts the social scenes behind the political controversies with more than a cursory sketch. Clearly, the author feels

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at home here, pausing, like Dante, to tell us which Italian pols belong on which circles of hell.

But Sassoon reserves his most withering blast for many of the social democratic leaders of the past quarter century, who could not disenthrall themselves from narrowly national politics even as the power of the nation-state to control its own economy was in terminal decline. "In spite of all the words and work spent on discussing international and European integration," Sassoon thunders, "in spite of the fact that the negative lessons of the protectionist 1930s had been regularly taught in schools and universities, in spite of the endless charade of expensive summits where politicians, goaded by the mass media, paraded with characteristic pomposity, masquerading as world statesmen while at the mercy of forces they were unable to understand . . . the strategy of the coordination of national economies remained adrift in the high seas of pious wishes."

As Sassoon tells it—and he tells in the most minute and convincing detail—the decline of the nation-state and the decline of social democracy are essentially the same story. A political tendency that had relied upon national government to regulate the economy was compelled, when the economy outran the regulatory capacities of national government, to revise many of its core principles. To date, that revisionism has entailed scaling back the welfare state, selling off state-owned industries, and abandoning attempts to reduce massive unemployment by creating public-sector jobs. As yet unable to build the trans-European political structures required to regulate a trans-European economy, social democratic parties and governments in the individual European states have only demonstrated the impotence of national policy.

Even in their glory years, Sassoon reminds us, the most successful European social democratic economies succeeded precisely because they weren't autarchic, because they factored in a degree of international interdependence. The genius of the Swedish system, as developed by labor economists Gosta Rehn and Rudolf Meidner in the 1950s, was that it promoted not only egalitarian full employment but global competitiveness as well—leveling wages upward but holding them to a fixed level no matter how successful the company, so that its wages and prices would not rise above that of the foreign competition. Twenty-five years later, when Meidner proposed setting aside a portion of companies' profits into worker-controlled funds for reinvestment, however, Swedish industry balked. Relocating a factory to a distant land in search of cheaper labor was now an option, as it had not been in the fifties, and management feared that any level of worker control of capital could thwart this option, or at least put the company at a competitive disadvantage to its counterparts in countries with no equivalent strictures.

National autonomy, Sassoon reminds us, has been eroding for quite some time. The prospect of a run on the currency—the malady that today plagues the developing nations of Asia—was an impediment to the Keynesian designs of the European left over thirty years ago. British Prime Minister Harold Wilson was recounting the events of 1964 when he recalled in his memoirs how "a newly elected government with a mandate from the people was being told . . . by international speculators, that the policies on which we had fought the election could not be implemented, that the Government was to be forced into the adoption of Tory policies to which it was fundamentally opposed." In 1976, another Labour government, this one headed by James Callaghan, was similarly compelled by a run on the pound to make far more draconian cuts than Wilson's had ever contemplated. In 1981, François Mitterrand returned the left to power in France, seeking to stimulate the economy in Keynesian fashion and nationalize a number of major economic institutions, in what Sassoon terms "an attempt to repeat the [immediate postwar British Labour] Atlee experiment in far less conducive economic and political circumstances." Indeed, not just socialism in one country but simple Keynesian expansion proved to be impossible. Faced with the double whammy of inflation and capital flight, Mitterrand reversed course—as had Callaghan before him, as had Helmut Schmidt when he'd been unable to persuade

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the Bundesbank to fund new jobs, as did the Scandinavians compelled to let their currencies float and their unemployment rates rise into double digits.

Throughout the seventies and eighties, a drumbeat of criticism from the Labour left and other bastions of rectitude insisted that the rightward drift of left-wing governments reflected little more than a weakness of will. Sassoon will have none of this; global markets, he insists, may not be nice but they are certainly real. The more serious problem has been the difficulties confronting the parties of the Euro-left in attempting to build new power centers to regulate those global markets. "To create European institutions and norms, replacing those of each nation-state, will be a momentous enterprise whose outcome is uncertain," Sassoon writes. But socialist parties "derive their legitimacy from nationally-based electorates"—who are hardly clamoring for continental government.

And yet—since Sassoon completed his monumental survey, parties of the left have come to power in every major western European capital. Just as postwar voters deemed the left the natural party of government to create mixed economies on the national level, so voters today have tapped the parties of the left to guide the transition to multinational mixed economies. The new governments in Bonn, Paris, and Rome, at least, are campaigning for a "social Europe," a Europe where some international entity, as yet uncreated, will have the authority, say, to undertake the public-works programs that each of these national governments is by itself unable—by terms of the Maastricht Treaty—to undertake.

But the creation of a social Europe, and of the political Europe that must precede it, must both await the creation of yet another Europe—a Europe of cross-border civil institutions. On Europe's business side, such institutions are popping up almost daily, with companies, banks, and stock exchanges merging across borders at a frightening pace. No such movement is remotely detectable among Europe's political parties—but among Europe's unions, there are some hopeful signs. Prodded by the impending shift to a common currency, the European Metalworkers Federation announced this November a plan "to establish a pan-European wage and collective bargaining strategy," which, it said, would include coordinated wage claims and the possibility of cross-border strikes.

This was merely an announcement, of course, not a fact; just one small step toward the creation of a common identity. Yet it is the kind of step that social democracy desperately needs to take. If European socialism is to have a second hundred years, it won't be as British, French, Swedish, Austrian, German, or Italian socialism. It will be simply—simply!—European. ●

Harold Meyerson is executive editor of *L.A. Weekly*.

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Democracy Deficits and Foreign Policy

Robert Dahl

WHO SPEAKS FOR AMERICA?
By Eric Alterman
Cornell University Press, 1998, 224 pp $25

PROBABLY NO important area of public policy presents such a daunting challenge to the theory and practice of democracy as foreign policy. Not only does foreign policy virtually escape popular control, but it will be difficult, and perhaps even impossible, to rectify this enormous democratic failure—or, to use the expression many Europeans apply to the European Union (EU), the "democratic deficit" in the way foreign policies are made.

Although others have dealt with the problem, in *Who Speaks for America?* Eric Alterman provides an impressive body of evidence and a vigorous argument intended to show how fully this failure applies to the experience of the United States. As Alterman shows, the democratic deficit in making American foreign policy is no recent phenomenon. Indeed, it has existed virtually from the founding of the republic.

Despite George Washington's concern in his farewell address for the importance of an enlightened public opinion in a republic, in Alterman's view he also "inaugurated a tradition of presidential secrecy in foreign affairs that would ultimately make such enlightenment impossible." Nor did his successors much improve matters. Jefferson not only purchased Louisiana without explicit congressional sanction but he helped mightily to create the public doctrine that was to influence American policies for untold generations to come: the "equation of the preservation of republican virtue and liberal prosperity with ceaseless physical expansion." To spread democracy and liberty throughout the benighted regions of the world was, it seems, the unique destiny and obligation of the Americans (that is, white male citizens of the United States).

By the end of the century, this theme had been reinterpreted by Admiral Mahan and Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner's work in turn influenced Brooks Adams, who "closely advised the president and his secretary, John Hay, during Theodore Roosevelt's two terms" and "counseled a policy of expansion, both commercial and political, into Asia, which required a Navy of the sort Mahan envisioned."

I shall leap over Alterman's detailed account of the intervening years. Among other crucial events, the readers of this journal do not need to be reminded that it was "the best and the brightest" who led this country into the disaster of Vietnam. Although some may take comfort in the role that public opinion played in bringing the war to an end, Alterman remains skeptical even there. I'm inclined to think that his skepticism is justified. He writes:

> Regarding the Vietnam protests, widely credited with having ended U.S. participation in that war, the evidence is mixed. It is certain that presidents Johnson and Nixon did not relish the domestic unrest the war was causing and may have rejected arguments in favor of escalation on behalf of domestic peace. But both presidents—Nixon in particular—derived great sympathy from large majorities of the country on Vietnam-related issues owing to the unpopularity of the protesters themselves. It was not until important establishment figures joined the ranks of the antiwar cause that either Johnson or Nixon seemed even to take it seriously. In either case, protest movements are no more or less democratic than other special-interest movements, except to the degree that they represent genuine majorities. More often than not, their de-

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mands are co-opted by politicians who learn to speak their language but finesse the substance of their complaints.

ALTERMAN DEVOTES an entire chapter to the creation of free-trade policies, particularly the adoption of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). He shows that these decisions were left almost entirely in the hands of the foreign-policy elites. As usual, the views of the general public were weakly held, ill-informed, or nonexistent, and little respected by members of the foreign-policy establishment. Yet the consequences for Americans were far from trivial. For example, in Alterman's view GATT poses a serious challenge to the federalist structure of the United States, because its rulings are binding on the states; threatens U.S. safety laws, including regulations about the safety of the food we eat; and endangers wildlife and environmental protections. The important point is not, I think, the extent to which Alterman's fears are justified. It is, rather, that decisions about GATT, NAFTA, and foreign trade are reached by bureaucratic and political elites virtually without public debate or widespread public consultation about the crucial issues.

To his credit, Alterman does not see conspiracy in all this. Others before him have discovered that the more closely you observe the details of American national policy-making (and not just foreign policy) the more likely you are to find confusion and chaos than conspiracy. Although, as Alterman points out, the American foreign-policy elites have consisted mainly of "Anglo-Americans" there are revealing exceptions. One is the highly influential role of American Jews in shaping American policies toward Israel. Although one might take their influence as a sign that democracy works pretty well after all, Alterman contends that even in this case the process is hardly democratic. It simply shows how special circumstances sometimes enable particular interests to influence foreign policy.

> That the pro-Israel position may have been morally correct in most or all of these interventions is beside the point. At the highest levels, U.S. foreign policy is not made with morality uppermost in the minds of decision makers. That so tiny a minority as American Jews have been so successful, with one tragic exception [the failure to respond to Nazi genocide], in shaping U.S. foreign policy despite a considerable history of anti-Semitism at nearly every level of American society demonstrates just how open the U.S. foreign policy process is to such manipulation, given the right circumstances.

For similar reasons, Cuban Americans dominate American policies toward Cuba. No doubt historians and political scientists will challenge some of Alterman's specific assertions and interpretations. He is perhaps more confident at times than the facts permit, and his argument may strike some readers as one-sided, even a bit strident. Yet I am convinced that his portrayal is essentially correct.

If it is in the main correct, then we need to confront at least two crucial questions. Why is the democratic deficit in foreign-policy decisions so huge? And what, if anything, can and should we try to do about it?

Alterman's answer to the first question is twofold. To begin with, there are all the usual weaknesses in democratic control over policy-making: low political participation, the decline of social ties, the failures of the media, the obscenities of campaign finance, and so on. To these standard handicaps on civic deliberation and participation, foreign policy imposes further obstacles. For many citizens, foreign affairs seem remote; the issues are complex; the discussions among elites are inaccessible, technical, arcane, and alienating; Americans are often poorly informed about the issues and many citizens have few if any incentives to improve their understanding; sometimes they make sense of what is happening by demonizing foreign antagonists, a distraction from the real issues that politicians often encourage. In addition, "Americans' admirable tendency to rally around their leadership during times of perceived crisis" undermines dissent and inhibits a critical discussion of the alternatives.

If Alterman's diagnosis is roughly correct, what is the best prescription for improvement? Can foreign policy be brought under greater democratic control? How?

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Alterman presents his solution "not as a detailed blueprint, but rather as a suggestive road map." The novel institution he proposes is an assembly consisting of a body of citizens who would deliberate on foreign-policy issues of signal importance. Although what he proposes resembles the highly innovative "Deliberative Polls" conducted by James Fishkin, it would differ in several crucial, and quite possibly fatal, respects.

Citizens selected in Fishkin's Deliberative Polls are, as in standard opinion polls, roughly representative of the population as a whole and sufficiently numerous (five hundred or more) to allow for statistically significant conclusions. However, Deliberative Polls avoid the limitation of standard surveys, in which the respondents simply answer questions posed to them, often many questions, with no opportunity for reflection, investigation, or discussion. In contrast, the citizens selected for a Deliberative Poll actually assemble under one roof for several days to reflect on a specific issue. They discuss the issue among themselves, ordinarily in small groups, and meet with experts and key policy makers for questioning. After several days of discussion and consultation they then express their considered judgments about policy. As Fishkin has demonstrated in the half dozen or so Deliberative Polls he has conducted in Britain and the United States, under these conditions a substantial number of citizens end up by changing their views. Almost certainly they come out far better informed. What is more, although all the evidence is not yet in, it seems altogether likely that their relatively brief experience heightens their lasting interest in and understanding of the issue on which they have deliberated, and perhaps in their concerns about public policy questions more generally.* At a minimum, it gives a good idea of the views that citizens in general would probably hold *if* they were to have greater opportunities for deliberation. Thus their views are entitled to far more serious consideration than the often superficial opinions people express in standard polls.

As best I can tell, Alterman wants to blend Fishkin's Deliberative Polls with a proposal for randomly selected advisory councils that I suggested some years ago.** I have grave doubts, however, that Alterman's solution will achieve the admirable end he has in mind.

In a discussion that is not always clear, at least to me, Alterman proposes that the members of his citizens assembly, or "jurors," be *elected* "by the population at large." Except for remarking that, as in Deliberative Polls, "citizen-jurors would not be self-selected" he does not explain precisely how they *would* be chosen, or how the aim of representativeness that he so strongly stresses, which would be achieved by statistical sampling, could be combined with elections. His solution is proportional representation in the form of cumulative voting "in a manner proposed by the unfairly maligned Lani Guinier." "Voting," he writes, "would be undertaken strictly on the basis of biographies and short statements provided by the potential jurors." He does not explain how such a limit could be enforced without running straight into formidable First Amendment problems. The "jurors would be paid a decent middle-class salary for their efforts" and having contracted to do so would after serving their terms "return to their former lives and hold seminars in local schools, libraries, and public-access cable-television stations explaining how they came to hold their current beliefs." Their salaries would continue, presumably throughout their lives, and they would be prohibited from re-election and lobbying. How all these restrictions could be enforced he does not explain.

*James Fishkin presents the basis for "deliberative polling" in democratic ideas and needs in *The Voice of the People, Public Opinion and Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, 1997).

**In *After the Revolution?* (Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 149–50, I proposed the creation of councils of randomly selected citizens, chosen to serve for a year, who would provide advice to mayors of large cities, state governors, and members of the House and Senate. I returned to the idea in *Controlling Nuclear Weapons: Democracy versus Guardianship* (1985) where I suggested that the assembly be called a minipopulus. The term never caught on—probably a good thing. With his Deliberative Polls, Fishkin moved from theory to action, as I did not, and in a way far more feasible than my minipopulus. I have proposed that something like his Deliberative Polls should be employed at national and local levels as part of a five-stage process for resolving the issue of Medicare (*Dissent*, Summer, 1997).

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He concedes that most of his readers will have trouble imagining how his proposals will ever come to fruition. He is, of course, dead right. But he attributes this as "less a comment on the nature of the reforms . . . than on the paucity of imagination in contemporary American politics." This remark seems to me not altogether fair to his critics. Surely it is not unreasonable to ask for more than a rough sketch of a solution that stimulates serious doubts even in a reader as sympathetic with his aims as I am, and as many others may be.

EVEN MORE serious obstacles stand in the way of his solution to the problem of the democratic deficit. Let me suggest four. First, if the problem of democratic control over foreign policy has persisted virtually since the beginning of the American republic, as Alterman argues persuasively, I suspect that its causes are even deeper, more enduring, and more difficult to eradicate than he seems to assume.

Second, the problem is not unique to the United States. A huge democratic deficit in making foreign policy exists, I believe, in all democratic countries—a bit more in some, perhaps, a bit less in others, but none has found a satisfactory solution. The generality of the problem reinforces my fear that to push back the existing barriers to popular participation in and control over foreign policy may be a far more formidable challenge than Alterman appears to believe.

Third, the globalization of economic activity, society, communication, and culture helps to transfer many important matters away from the control of nation-states to the bureaucratic and political elites who largely determine the decisions made on behalf of international organizations. Even where nominally democratic structures exist, as in the EU, they are weak. After all, the term democratic deficit originated in discussion about the EU. Yet nothing comparable even to the shadow democracy of the EU exists for other international organizations. I do not mean to suggest that the work of international organizations is unimportant, or that the trade-offs between democracy and international systems are, on balance, necessarily unfavorable. If that were so, the problem would be rather easy to solve. The fact is, however, that international systems are often highly beneficial to human welfare, even necessary to it. Nonetheless, the trade-offs with democracy are rarely taken into account and almost never adequately estimated, discussed, and debated. I believe it may be taken as a general rule that whenever marginal gains achievable from international systems are posed against marginal losses to democratic control, democratic controls will prove to be the loser.

Finally, any effort to persuade Americans to confront seriously the flabbiness of their control over foreign affairs and international organizations may well be met with indifference or hostility from intellectuals and academics. They (honesty compels me to say we) are overwhelmingly internationalists. Many of us travel and live abroad, may read one or more foreign languages, perhaps speak one or two at least passably, meet often with foreign colleagues, count foreigners among our best friends, and overwhelmingly oppose the parochial visions of populist nationalists like Patrick Buchanan and ideological Neanderthals like Jesse Helms. As a result, many academics and intellectuals might reject Alterman's argument without giving it the serious attention it deserves.

To do so would be irresponsible. His interpretation is important, well buttressed, and, I think, basically correct. Although I am more pessimistic than he about the prospects for solving the problem he so ably poses, I hope his book is read, as it should be, by everyone who is concerned about the underachievement of American democracy.

I hope, too, that it stimulates a dedicated search for workable solutions. Unless democratic processes can be more effectively applied to foreign and international issues, these matters will pretty much remain, I fear, in the hands of bureaucratic and political elites. As globalization grows, which it surely will, their influence will increase still further, at the expense of the traditional democratic institutions by means of which citizens in many countries have attempted to govern themselves. ●

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Ben-Gurion's Willing Executioners

Derek J. Penslar

THE FOUNDING MYTHS OF ISRAEL: NATIONALISM, SOCIALISM, AND THE MAKING OF THE JEWISH STATE
by Zeev Sternhell
Princeton University Press, 1998 464 pp $29.95

THE JEWS, Heinrich Heine is supposed to have said, are like everyone else but more so. How true for Zionism, which is at heart nothing but a variety of nationalism, the most compelling form of collective identity in the modern world. Yet during the first half of this century, the enormous difficulty of creating a Jewish state and the need to combat Zionism's many ideological rivals endowed the Zionist project with an intensity unprecedented in the history of nationalism.

The state of Israel is now fifty years old. Although the nationalist fervor of some Israelis is fiercer than ever, for others it has dimmed and been replaced by a comfortable, if rather weary, sense of at-homeness. But Israel, it appears, is not destined to join the periphery of nations, to become yet another small state, a Middle East Ruritania. The assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995, the election of the hawkish Benjamin Netanyahu half a year later, and the near-total deterioration of the peace process since then are symptoms of an existential crisis within Israel: unresolved and escalating conflicts about the very nature of the state, about its relationship with its citizens and with the Jewish faith.

Israeli intellectuals, most of whom are secular and leftist, tend to blame the rightist and Orthodox camps for the increasingly ethnocentric and fundamentalist qualities of Israeli political culture. One group of scholars, however, mainly historians and sociologists at Israeli universities, points an accusing finger at the Zionist left itself, at the labor movement that built the country during the interwar period and dominated the state of Israel for half a century. These critics write in the spirit of Julien Benda, who, in 1927, attributed the decline of the French Third Republic to the "treason of the clerics," intellectuals who had abandoned Cartesian rationalism for a politics of passion and a brutally instrumental view of humanity. Similarly, since the Likud triumph of 1977, some in Israel have blamed the fall of the secular republic on the treason of the apparatchiks, the bosses of Labor Zionism, who are accused of caring less for democracy and social justice than for state building, and of pursuing a militaristic and expansionist agenda.

Zeev Sternhell, a distinguished, albeit controversial, historian of European fascism, is a prominent member of this group of critical Israeli scholars. To invoke Isaiah Berlin's distinction between foxes, who have many ideas, and hedgehogs, who have one grand idea, Sternhell is a quintessential hedgehog. His *idée fixe* is the belief that fascism originated as a mutation of Marxist social democracy into an ethnocentric "nationalist socialism." Antirational and antidemocratic, nationalist socialism claimed to esteem the common laborer and to fight for social justice, but its appreciation of labor was purely instrumental, deriving from the worker's function as the lifeblood of the nation. Unlike social democracy, which aspired to alter the economic environment in order to increase human freedom, nationalist socialism cynically manipulated the individual in order to promote the nation's control over its spatial environment.

As befits a hedgehog, Sternhell has sharp quills. His writing, always barbed, becomes downright venomous when he turns his atten-

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tion on to Zionism. Sternhell writes with a sense of mission; he is determined to show that Labor Zionism was nothing but a carbon copy of European nationalist socialism.

The seeds of Zionist nationalist socialism, according to Sternhell, were present from the beginning of the Second Aliyah, the Zionist settlement of the period 1903–1914. Most of the youthful pioneers who came to Palestine from Russia belonged to non- or antisocialist political organizations; and even the formally Marxist Po'alei Tsiyon (Workers of Zion) was robbed of its socialist spirit by its leader, David Ben-Gurion. Ben-Gurion oversaw the liquidation of the Po'alei Tsiyon when, in 1919, it joined with formerly unaffiliated "independents," such as the Zionist ideologue Berl Katznelson, to form Ahdut ha-'Avodah (Unity of Labor). The Zionist trade union, the Histadrut, founded in 1920, was designed from the start to mobilize Jewish workers for nation building, not for class struggle and the attainment of social equity. The Histadrut was in no way hostile to private capital; rather, like all forms of nationalist socialism, it welcomed the role of "productive" capital in the building of the nation. The final step, in Sternhell's view, was the creation in 1930 of Mapai (the Land of Israel Workers' Party), which involved a union, of a kind unprecedented in the history of social democracy, between Ahdut ha-'Avodah, which was at least technically socialist, and the stridently antisocialist Ha-Po'el Ha-Tsa'ir (The Young Worker).

Although the book focuses on the period between 1904 and 1940, in his epilogue Sternhell breathlessly attributes all of Israel's major problems since 1948 to the obsessive statism inherent in the Labor Zionist project. Its indifference to social policy led to discrimination against the Middle Eastern Jewish immigrants of the 1950s. Its brutal treatment of Arabs within Israel's boundaries blocked the writing of a constitution, which would have had to guarantee equal treatment under the law. And its territorial aggressiveness, fueled by atavistic religious zealotry, set off the war of 1967 and promoted the colonization of the West Bank under Labor governments during the next decade.

Crucial to Sternhell's argument is his tight association between nationalist socialism and Labor Zionism's "constructive socialism." Sternhell is onto something here. To be sure, Ben-Gurion found it exceedingly difficult to form governing coalitions with doctrinaire socialists. Chaim Arlosoroff, the number-two man in Mapai before his assassination in 1933, wrote a major treatise on the "Jewish people's socialism," whose rejection of class warfare and call for national unity did in many ways resemble the program of European intellectuals who describe their country (rather than any class within it) as "proletarian," in need of collective liberation through national renewal. Finally, Sternhell is right to portray the Histadrut as an oligarchic political machine whose relentless pursuit of nation building at the expense of social democracy alienated many of its working-class members.

WHATEVER INSIGHTS the book offers, however, are drowned out by splenetic outbursts and plain errors. Like Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's controversial best-seller, *Hitler's Willing Executioners, The Founding Myths of Israel* brings considerable power of mind to an important subject, only to fritter away the book's potential through polemic and exaggeration. Time and time again, when Sternhell comes across a fact or quotation that appears to contradict his thesis, he conjures it away by claiming that his subjects "knew very well" that things were as Sternhell believes they were. For example, we are told that "the Eretz Israel bourgeoisie knew that it had nothing to fear from the labor movement." Although the two engaged in a bit of "mutual mudslinging," the bourgeoisie was pleased to become the Laborites' junior political partner. If this is so, I wonder, why did bourgeois groups in the World Zionist Organization (WZO) campaign against Labor throughout the 1920s, slash funding for collective settlement, and throw Labor out of the WZO executive in 1927? Why did Ben-Gurion have to engage in feverish electoral campaigning among the Jewish masses in eastern Europe in order to attain Labor hegemony over the WZO during the early 1930's?

In *The Founding Myths of Israel*, as in his other work, Sternhell shows himself to be a

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remarkably ahistorical historian: occasional remarks about historical context, contingency, and discontinuity are overwhelmed by an essentialist and teleological historical narrative. Ideologies shape institutions and overpower socioeconomic conditions. So, for example, according to Sternhell, Labor Zionism's rejection of revolutionary socialism had far more to do with the early-twentieth-century writings of the philosopher A. D. Gordon than with the challenges of constructing a homeland in an area with few Jewish workers and even fewer entrepreneurs: a land starved for capital, under foreign rule, and confronted by an Arab majority that wholeheartedly opposed the Zionist project. Such factors are, in Sternhell's view, epiphenomenal.

On the other hand, Sternhell is quite willing to relegate the role of ideology to the sidelines when it suits his purpose. For example, he refuses to take seriously the ideological differences between Ahdut ha-'Avodah and Ha-Po'el Ha-Tsa'ir. This leaves him incapable of accounting for the rivalry throughout the 1920s between the two parties, or the reasons for their merger in 1930. On another point, Sternhell claims that the Zionist agricultural collectives were a purely pragmatic response to the scarcity of resources and Arab labor. But why, then, did Russian Jewish radicals, contemporaries of the early Zionists, establish collective farms in the relatively hospitable United States? Finally, and most disturbingly, Sternhell denies any fundamental conceptual differences between Labor and the militant Revisionist Zionism of Vladimir Jabotinsky: "[Berl] Katznelson described 'socialist' Zionism as an enterprise of conquest; Revisionist Zionism never had any other objective. The two forms of Zionism differed only in their methods."

Admittedly, the cleavage between Labor and Revisionist Zionism is often exaggerated, particularly by self-righteous Labor Zionists. But Labor and Revisionist Zionism make up, whatever the linkages between them, distinct conceptual universes. Sternhell has to make his wild claim in order to justify a book that savages Labor while almost totally neglecting Revisionism, the true legatee of European nationalist socialism within the Zionist movement.

Sternhell lumps Labor Zionism with European nationalist socialism and separates it from European social democracy. Generalizing from the cases of France, Germany, and Austria, he claims social democracy to be incomparably more democratic, rationalist, humanist, and pacific than the Labor Zionist miscreant. (All non-Marxist forms of socialism, such as populism and Kropotkinesque anarchism, are depicted as wormholes leading straight into the abyss of nationalist socialism.) Whereas the leaders of Labor Zionism were country bumpkins, unfamiliar with socialist literature and incapable of producing a theoretician of substance, Europe's social democrats were led by superior intellects and gentle souls. Sternhell's infatuation with European social democracy is so bathetic that it brings to mind a schoolgirl crush on *Titanic*'s Leonardo DiCaprio—it grows all the stronger for the knowledge that the big ship is doomed to sink.

Ironically, Sternhell compares Ben-Gurion and Katznelson unfavorably with the French socialist Jean Jaurès, when in fact much of Jaurès's worldview—his pragmatism, ambivalence about class conflict, and Jacobin militarism—was similar to that of his Labor Zionist contemporaries. Moreover, European social democracy was riddled with leadership cults, visceral nationalist attachments (which soured relations between French and German socialists), and religious motifs (for example, Italian socialist baptisms, where the name of Ferdinand Lassalle was piously invoked).

If Sternhell wishes to criticize Labor Zionism on absolute, moral grounds, he may have a case to make, but his rigid separation of Labor Zionism from interwar social democracy cannot withstand even the most superficial historical analysis. In France, Leon Blum's Popular Front strove for social reform within the existing capitalist framework, and his nationalization of military industry was designed to fortify France against its enemies—a statist enterprise worthy of Ben-Gurion himself. And in Austria, when the social democrats briefly participated in postwar governing coalitions, they did not declare war on private capital, nor did they seek to transform the state

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into a dictatorship of the proletariat. As Mitchell Cohen noted in his 1987 book *Zion and State* (a work with a similar purview to Sternhell's, but far more credible and balanced), Otto Bauer, the leader of the Austrian social democrats, justified his party's actions with the claim that the republican state balanced competing class interests. Thus Ben-Gurion's subordination of the working class to the needs of the nation and state had a social democratic pedigree, or at least parallel, after all.

STERNHELL holds the Zionist labor movement to absurdly high standards. He comments bitterly that Palestine's Jewish leaders did not send fighters to the defense of the Spanish Republic during the 1936–1939 civil war—without mentioning that at this time the Zionist leadership was preoccupied with a Palestinian Arab revolt. Sternhell is shocked that the Labor Zionist bosses earned significantly more than agricultural laborers, and that Ben-Gurion wallowed in the luxury of a four-room apartment and—gasp!—had the money to give his daughter piano lessons. (During the 1930s, Ben-Gurion and his colleagues earned at most $2,000 per year, while WZO officials and representatives of American Jewish philanthropies made salaries five or six times greater.) Sternhell sees Ben-Gurion and Katznelson as Orwell's Napoleon and Squeaker, and the kibbutz as Animal Farm.

Sternhell is troubled not merely by the Zionist elite's level of comfort but by their unwillingness to instill into the Yishuv working class a proletarian subculture through a separate educational system teaching Marxist values. But why should they have created an adversarial subculture when the entire society was a blank slate, a nation to be created from scratch? In the early 1900s, European Jewry's greatest enemy was not private capital, but rather the oppressive consequences of a deprivation of capital. East European Jewry was being economically strangled due to a virulent combination of anti-Semitism and developmental backwardness. Sternhell plays down the extent to which Zionism originated as a response to the physical plight of East European Jewry. It fits his thesis far more neatly to present Zionism as a movement of ethnocentric self-assertion, a battle against assimilation similar to that waged by other stateless peoples in Europe's polyglot empires.

There is nothing wrong with this comparison, but it tells only half the story. In any case, Sternhell lays out the concept of the oppressed nation only to condemn it as a fiction and inherently protofascist to boot. He ignores the undeniable political and social reality of oppressed nations and their strong economic links to a particular class. In eastern Europe, according to the historian Ezra Mendelsohn, "the oppressed minority *nations*—the Lithuanians, Latvians, Belorussians, Ukrainians, and so on—were often nearly identical with oppressed social *classes*—the peasantry and the proletariat." The same was true for oppressed west European nations such as the Irish. There is little difference between Ben-Gurion's statement of 1919 that "the national question depends on the social question" and the Irish socialist James Connolly saying, in 1898, that "the Irish Question [is] at bottom an economic question" and that English and Irish socialists must organize separately.

Not all Irish nationalism is nationalist socialism; the same is true for east European nationalism in its various forms, and for Zionism. There is a fundamental intolerance as well as disconnection from reality behind Sternhell's argument that the only legitimate type of nationalism is the utilitarian variety that Sternhell claims has flourished in western Europe and the United States. Sternhell is correct that nationalism "can exist and develop on the basis of rationalism, individualism, and genuine secularism." But do we really want to hold up as models of benign, inclusive nationalism the historical experiences of western Europe and the United States—lands of conquest, plagued by social inequities, and tarnished by outbreaks of chauvinism and even (in the case of France) homegrown fascism?

Sternhell's rigid west-Eurocentrism supports an aggressive anticlericalism (aggravated, no doubt, by the Kulturkampf between secularism and Orthodoxy in contemporary Israel). Sternhell claims that despite a thin veneer of secularism, "the burning embers of

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the Jewish tradition" smoldered in the heart of Labor Zionism. But this argument misses the crucial distinction between religious sentiment and a sense of religious heritage. All nationalisms are rooted in myths of common historical experience, and for many peoples religious bonds have served as a powerful source of collective identity. For the Jews, those bonds were central throughout most of their history. When divested of both God and rabbinic authority, however, Judaism metamorphoses into a nontranscendent feeling of historical continuity—a liberal and humanitarian approach to the Jewish religious tradition.

Nationalism cannot be wished away, but it can be reconfigured and imbued with liberal and humanist sentiment. In the case of Zionism, taking a fundamentally sympathetic stance toward Jewish nationalism and appreciating its complex relationship with the Jewish religious tradition is a necessary step for anyone seriously interested in softening Israel's harsh political climate. Such an approach is bound to accomplish more than hurling bitter recriminations at the fallen Titans from Israel's mythic past. ●

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Understanding Du Bois

Fred Montas, Jr.

W. E. B. DU BOIS AND AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT: FABIANISM AND THE COLOR LINE
by Adolph Reed, Jr.
Oxford University Press, 1997 282 pp $35

W. E. B. DU BOIS'S productive use of his ninety-five years on earth casts a vigilant shadow over anyone who thinks about the political dimensions of the black experience. Few observations made during our century have been so prescient as Du Bois's well-known 1903 declaration, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." Few monographs have challenged and redirected American historical inquiry as did *Black Reconstruction* in 1935. Since his death in 1963, no black intellectual has acquired the authoritative stature of Du Bois. All this justifies the attention Du Bois's life and writings have received in recent years. But it does not explain why Du Bois remains the iconic black intellectual.

In *W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*, Adolph Reed, Jr., attempts to explain the logic of Du Bois's political thought and his status as a model for black intellectuals. Reed's command as a scholar and a polemicist holds the reader's attention throughout this compact book. Using a method he calls the "generativist" approach to the history of American political thought, by which he "anchor[s] inquiry overtly to contemporary concerns while requiring thick historical grounding," Reed carries out four tasks, each of which makes a contribution to our understanding of Du Bois.

First, Reed argues that Du Bois's intellectual career was guided by a "scientific" approach to social inquiry, and that the interventionist orientation of late-nineteenth-century social science deeply shaped Du Bois's view of scholarship. This is significant for Reed, because it allows him to offer a model of political thought as policy-rooted in contrast to the recent academic obsession with politics as interpretation and culture. Throughout the

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book, Reed aims to explicate how Du Bois's political thought was directed toward social change. His argument turns on his treatment of *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) as a central text for understanding Du Bois's intellectual commitments to collectivism and elitism as the organizing principles of his political thought.

Collectivism, in Reed's view, "entails typically an emphasis on expertise as a legitimate, decisive social force, notions of the impartiality or neutrality of the state and resonant assumptions of the neutral guiding role of technology." In *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois declared that the "art of organization" was the "hardest for the freedman to learn." Therefore, it was the responsibility of the "better classes" of blacks to organize the community. With this text, Reed claims, "certain core principles of Du Bois's thought . . . were set." Within a few years, Du Bois became less concerned with manipulating black communities, but these same principles formed his "state-centered" critique of the political status of African Americans.

Reed's second task is to demonstrate that Du Bois held fast to these commitments to elitism and collectivism even as he espoused, alternately and simultaneously, interracialist, socialist, and Pan-Africanist ideas. Du Bois adopted new positions with changing historical contexts, but Reed argues that the timing and reasons for his changes are of interest only to pedants and were secondary to those intellectual commitments that Du Bois maintained throughout those changes. This argument is valuable because it sets aside the debate about which intellectual period expressed the ideas of the authentic Du Bois. With Reed's analysis, arguments about which Du Bois was most interesting or most effective politically are now merely parlor games.

Having established elitism and collectivism as the foundations of Du Bois's political thought, Reed turns his attention to Du Bois's use of the idea of double consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois never defined double consciousness, which has allowed some controversy to swirl around its meaning. The most well-known formulation of this phrase occurs in the first essay of *Souls*, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," where Du Bois writes,

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,— an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.
>
> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a truer and better self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. . . . He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

Reed argues that Du Bois held a scientific understanding of double consciousness (consistent with his Progressive-era intellectual milieu) that expressed a dichotomy between what he believed to be the primitive nature of blacks and the civilized soul of European culture. From Reed's perspective, Du Bois's treatment of double consciousness is fundamentally neo-Lamarckian, following the evolutionary theory of the eighteenth-century French naturalist Jean Lamarck, who postulated that acquired characteristics can be passed down genetically. Du Bois used double consciousness to ground his hope that "some day on American soil two world-races may give each to each those characteristics both sadly lack." Double consciousness with a Lamarckian bent offered Du Bois a way to locate blacks in the social order and describe a path for their uplift. As neo-Lamarckism fell into disrepute, Reed argues, Du Bois ceased to refer to double consciousness.

REED'S INTERPRETATION of the social-evolutionist basis of double consciousness undermines recent claims that Du Bois captured the existential truth about American blackness in his treatment of double consciousness. Those who posit this claim, argues Reed, are especially mistaken in placing double consciousness at the center of Du

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Bois's thought, since he did not use that term after *Souls*. This charge concerns Reed's real target in the book: those black intellectuals who offer fundamentally apolitical analyses of African-American thought in general and Du Bois's work in particular.

The 1960s saw a renewed interest in Du Bois. Introductions to editions of *Souls* published at that time focused on the political qualities of the book, taking as its centerpiece the essay "Of Booker T. Washington and Others," which criticized Washington's tolerance for the political exclusion of blacks. Du Bois's advocacy of social and political engagement appears forcefully here because of its contrast to Washington's plan to ensure that blacks would not disrupt the political balance of the South. Moreover, given Washington's status as the unrivaled heir to Frederick Douglass as the leader of black America, this essay, as Du Bois's biographer David Levering Lewis puts it, "made *Souls* a contemporary bombshell."

Reed complains that *Souls*'s interpreters of the 1980s and 1990s have gone out of their way to avoid the politics of Du Bois's critique of Washington and instead see the idea of double consciousness as a metaphor or philosophical construct. Reed's fourth task is to demonstrate that recent accounts of *Souls* "trivialize the idea of the political by deploying [double consciousness] as a generic allusion . . . and by obfuscating the character of politics as an autonomous domain of social activity." Specifically, Houston Baker and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., offer commentaries that are "compatible . . . with the broader rhetorical tendency in the Reagan-Bush-Clinton era to diminish the significance of politics as a consequential endeavor in American society." Drawing on Martin Kilson's writings in these pages, Reed argues that Baker and Gates typify the ambivalence of middle-class blacks who are liberal on race but conservative on class. Moreover, such blacks experience a marginality among both whites and blacks but typically understand this "double marginality" as "a marker of elevated status and an artifact of the racial burden borne uniquely by elite nonwhites." Thus, double consciousness is a compelling metaphor for them because "it expresses in the same instant celebration and complaint." As such, double consciousness has become "the neurasthenia of the black professional-managerial class at the end of the twentieth century."

Clearly Reed's is not a study of political thought in the conventional sense. He is not interested in how Du Bois treated concepts such as obligation, freedom, legitimacy, authority, or equality. Instead, Reed seeks to excavate the sources and implications of Du Bois's political thought in order to make a broader statement about political criticism and activism. According to Reed, Du Bois's scientific approach to social problems guided his political thought toward the analysis of the observable facts of the state's operations. Furthermore, Reed persuasively argues that criticizing state programs and policies and organizing to change them is more important, politically, than writing about the values and lifestyles of social groups as the sources of their politics. Central to this line of thinking is the separation of politics and culture as two distinct realms of human life; recall Reed's description of politics as an "autonomous domain of social activity." For twenty years, Reed has consistently argued for keeping culture out of politics and has criticized much of contemporary black thought for placing the meaning of blackness at the center of an interpretation of black politics.

IN SEEKING to excavate the sources and ramifications of Du Bois's politics, Reed places undue emphasis on Du Bois's commitment to science as the basis of his political thought. In many respects, Du Bois was suspicious of science, which could not explain or change the typically irrational behavior of whites toward blacks. Consider "A Litany of Atlanta," a poem written in response to the 1906 Atlanta race riot, where Du Bois cried, "Who made these devils? Who nursed them in crime and fed them on injustice? Who ravished and debauched their mothers and grandmothers? Who bought and sold their crime, and waxed fat and rich on public iniquity?/ Thou knowest, good God!" This is not the voice of a man convinced of the progressive role of science in society.

Throughout his life, Du Bois confronted the often inexplicable circumstances of black existence without the optimism of a scientific

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man. Even as he did so, however, his work remained in the service of racial uplift. Du Bois, after all, claimed he had no use for art that was not propaganda. It is impossible to say if this perspective compromised the quality of Du Bois's creative pieces; certainly, Du Bois did not reach the artistic heights to which he aspired in his youth. Nevertheless, his poems, novels, stories, and prose style reveal important dimensions of his political thought. Although Reed appreciates Du Bois's artistic inclinations and stylistic gifts, he does not reflect on their significance in shaping his thought. Just as Baker and Gates are wrong to depoliticize Du Bois in favor of his lyricism, Reed is mistaken in failing to draw connections between Du Bois's artistry and politics.

For Reed, "Political ideas function pragmatically, as instruments of real world objectives tied to historically specific debates and struggles." Du Bois remains a pertinent thinker because he was "one of the very most consistently and resolutely political of all twentieth-century black intellectuals." But in his own time, Du Bois was not always seen in this light. Reed does not consider some of the criticisms leveled at Du Bois by A. Philip Randolph, Chandler Owen, and others writing for the *Messenger* in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Typical of these is a review of Du Bois's *Darkwater* entitled "Phases of Du Bois" from the April-May 1920 issue of the *Messenger*. In it, William Colson chided Du Bois for emphasizing "the moral and esthetic . . . to the detriment of the scientific and the radical." Du Bois was "a romanticist of the highest order. Mystic, passionate, free spirited, his essays are never mere prose. They are prayers and panegyrics, strangely wild and picturesque, satiric and expressive of heavy feeling." Colson labels Du Bois an "idealist" and *Darkwater* "a work of art." Perhaps this is why Reed, who once wrote that music is politically mute, ignores this important book. As a work of art however, it is not void of political content or intention; rather it overflows with Du Bois's trademark condemnation of offenses committed against blacks and suggestions for rectifying them.

Reed also simplifies Du Bois's consideration of double consciousness. By packaging Du Bois in the box of Progressive-era social evolutionism, Reed hopes to show that Du Bois held a practical understanding of double consciousness. But it is neither inconceivable nor incompatible for Du Bois to have held both literary and scientific understandings of double consciousness. All that Reed gains from using neo-Lamarckism to explain double consciousness is a way to justify its disappearance from Du Bois's vocabulary after *Souls*. (At the same time, Reed ignores Du Bois's consistent references to "the veil" [through which blacks became aware of their double consciousness] for several decades following the publication of *Souls*.) It is unnecessary for Reed to dig out the scientific roots of double consciousness in order to assert its political salience. Du Bois deployed double consciousness as a metaphor in the service of politics; as a recognizable term with figurative dimensions. With rigid boundaries separating culture from politics, Reed fails to capture the nuances of this central, if short-lived, concept of Du Bois's political thought.

Furthermore, Reed errs in placing all of Du Bois's intellectual adjustments and phases under the rubric of collectivism. In a study of his political thought, Du Bois's Pan-Africanism and socialism deserve to receive more attention than they do here. Although Reed helps us understand that looking for a true Du Bois from any one of his periods is irrelevant, Du Bois's search for different approaches to the race question speaks to more than pedantic concerns. To understand him politically, it is important to investigate the rationale for the ways he changed with (and in the case of his socialism, against) his times; others who assumed different political positions became conservative or irrelevant in ways Du Bois managed to avoid. Reed correctly describes a Du Bois who was steadfastly collectivist, but Du Bois was also politically oceanic; his range of concerns and willingness to explore different ways to address social problems suggest a more complex logic to his politics than that offered by Reed.

W. E. B. DU BOIS *and American Political Thought* opens with epigrams from Marx ("All social life is essentially practical") and Hegel ("One final word about

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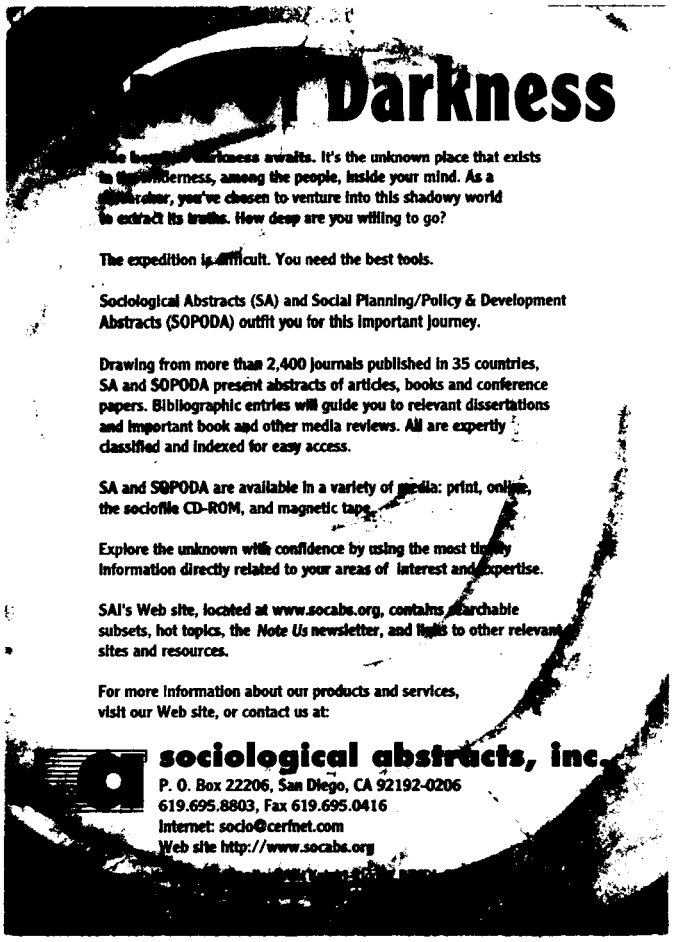
giving instruction as to what the world ought to be. Philosophy in any case always comes on the scene too late to give it. . . . The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk"). The book closes with Marx's Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." Reed cites these authorities to support his depiction of Du Bois as an advocate for hard-headed, strategy-minded, progressive politics. This lionized Du Bois is as flat and iconic as Gates et al.'s dandy Du Bois, and both must be laid to rest. Du Bois understood that interpretation offers a way to confront the world in periods when we cannot change it. In this sense, Du Bois had the political disposition of a sensual pessimist, one whose faith in the possibility of social improvement led him to write and struggle against despairing conditions without the optimist's or scientist's faith in the inevitability of progress. "Pessimism is cowardice," wrote Du Bois in *Darkwater*. "The man who cannot frankly acknowledge the 'Jim-Crow' car as a fact and yet live and hope is simply afraid either of himself or of the world. There is not in the world a more disgraceful denial of human brotherhood than the 'Jim-Crow' car of the southern United States; but, too, just as true, there is nothing more beautiful in the universe than sunset and moonlight on Montego Bay in far Jamaica. And both things are true and both belong to this our world, and neither can be denied." Reed presents a convincing argument for a particularly important dimension of Du Bois's political thought, but he does so as he denies other equally significant sources and features of Du Bois's politics. ●

FRED MONTAS, JR., is a Ph.D. student in political theory at Cornell.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Finding Labor's Voice

Nelson Lichtenstein

FROM THE ASHES OF THE OLD: AMERICAN LABOR AND AMERICA'S FUTURE
by Stanley Aronowitz
Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998 256 pp $25

THE APPEARANCE of Stanley Aronowitz's new book on the future of American labor comes precisely a quarter-century after he burst into the consciousness of my New Left generation with the publication of *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness*. That book took its title and much of its spirit from an old bit of communist doggerel:

> The Cloakmakers Union is a no-good union
> It's a company union by the bosses . . .
> The Dubinskys, the Hillquits, the Thomases
> By the workers are making false promises.
> They preach socialism but they practice fascism
> To save capitalism by the bosses

Needless to say, this little poem appears nowhere in *From the Ashes of the Old*. Aronowitz, a professor of sociology at the City University of New York, writes not as the visionary partisan of some radical union future, but as an advocate of (or perhaps as the loyal opposition to) the trade unionism of our day. In 1973 Aronowitz saw organized labor and collective bargaining as largely counterpoised to an insurgent radicalism embedded within the consciousness of working-class America. The trade unions, he then wrote, had "evolved into a force for integrating the workers into the corporate capitalist system."

But in his new book, Aronowitz turns this proposition on its head. The unions are now virtually the only institution in American life that stand athwart the ideological and social dominance of capital. Indeed, trade unionism itself is the essential lever necessary to unlock whatever leftist potential still resides within the hearts and minds of the working population. In fact and imagination, the unions stand, for the first time in two generations, on the left side of American political culture.

The Aronowitzes of 1973 and 1998 are here juxtaposed not to chide the author for changing his views, but as a kind of signpost that measures how thoroughly our understanding of American trade unionism, both past and present, has been transformed. Aronowitz's book is therefore notable because it signals a rapproachment between the "actually existing" trade unions and a generation of academic intellectuals who once were far more alienated. Although the emergence of John Sweeney and his associates to top leadership positions in the AFL-CIO is the most visible sign of labor's transformation, intellectuals like Stanley Aronowitz actually made the greater political shift. At some point in the Reagan era, they accommodated themselves to a well-tempered social democracy that consigned any remaining revolutionary visions to the arcane discourse of the postgraduate seminar.

I share much of the ideological trajectory traveled by Aronowitz, but for all his insights, this book is irritating because he is so unself-conscious about that shift. *From the Ashes of the Old* combines a didactic history lesson with a set of "what is to be done" propositions about the future. The latter are largely sensible and intelligent, focusing upon the ways in which professional, technical, and even managerial employees constitute the union movement's new organizing frontier. But his contemporary analysis—both sociological and political—rests upon a potted history that has airbrushed some of the most vexing dilemmas in labor's past. Aronowitz properly understands that American labor needs leaders who can make a union social agenda synonymous with the national interest. But when he offers up Walter Reuther and Albert Shanker as historical models of this sort, eyebrows are going to rise, and not just among aging New Leftists.

Shanker and Reuther were "big thinkers," and both started off as union-building radicals,

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but in their latter years they both came to symbolize the triumph of an accommodationist realpolitik over social-movement unionism. Aronowitz memorializes a rather sugar-coated Reuther who put UAW power at the service of the insurgent political movements of the 1960s. But *contra* the author's account, the real Reuther had so linked his fortunes to Lyndon Johnson that he battled the Vietnam doves and Robert Kennedy Democrats during the crucial 1968 electoral season. And Aronowitz has only kind words for Albert Shanker, whose increasingly neoconservative leadership of the American Federation of Teachers long proved an obstacle to the kind of union progressivism presided over by the Sweeneyites.

Moreover, Aronowitz adopts as his own an argument that both former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich and many contemporary laborites have mistakenly turned into a sort of left-liberal orthodoxy. This is the idea that labor-management relations were characterized by a "social compact" during the 1950s, which contemporary unionists battle to restore, if and when they can find an appropriate set of corporate partners. But such a social compact never existed, and if you had asked Walter Reuther, not to mention Jimmy Hoffa, if such an accommodation characterized collective bargaining or government policy in the strike-prone 1950s, they would have thought you a management propagandist.

Indeed, the phrase "social compact" is a product not of the 1950s, when it was absent from the laborite vocabulary, but of the 1980s, when liberals invented it as a way of explaining what they had lost without thereby becoming too cozy with the unions. But if we think that the doubling of the working-class standard of living between 1947 and 1973 was a product of such a social compact, we will have learned the wrong lesson. Despite all their bureaucratization, the unions could actually shut down key sectors of the economy in those mid-century decades. In 1959, for example, the otherwise stolidly led Steelworkers conducted the largest strike in American history, putting more than seven hundred thousand workers on the street for 116 days, in the face of both a Taft-Hartley injunction and a lingering recession. Such power gave labor an articulate potency within the halls of power that is sadly missing today, no matter how intelligent or reasonable the voice.

Aronowitz's didacticism becomes more useful when he turns his attention to the fate of white-collar and public-employee unionism in New York City. This has been his milieu for more than a third of a century; and it also happens to be the scene of labor's most dynamic and successful organizing effort in many decades. Aronowitz calls this achievement one of the best-kept secrets of postwar labor. It's been a secret, not because the *New York Times* failed to report it, but because so many in both the academy and the house of labor never took seriously the organization of those whose relationship to the point of production seemed so attenuated. But as Aronowitz points out, white-collar workers are the "invisible glue of administration." Clerical labor has neither power nor aura, he writes, "only a kind of grudging indispensability."

Once we take off our Marxoid blinders, we can see that in the years between 1957 and 1962 the offices, classrooms, and hospital hallways of New York City proved the birthplace of modern public-employee unionism, in a fashion quite similar to that of depression-era Flint, Akron, and Pittsburgh, whose mills and factories spawned the industrial unionism of that era. Pioneer radicals like Jerry Wulf and David Selden generated the kind of creative chaos that impelled New York Mayor Robert Wagner, Jr., followed a few years later by President John F. Kennedy, to promulgate the collective-bargaining structures that would facilitate the dramatic growth of unions like the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees and the American Federation of Teachers, whose size now outstrips that of the old heavy-industry unions.

But such growth has not compensated for the marginalization of trade unionism in virtually every other sector of the corporate economy. Thus, to restore union power and density to even the modest levels enjoyed in the early 1970s, the labor movement will need to organize some ten million new workers. To maintain even its current size, three hundred

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thousand new workers must be recruited each year. Site-specific organizing efforts, no matter how successful, won't reverse this doleful trend, nor will more money for television ads or political lobbying or even for the hiring of hundreds of youthful organizers, useful and inspiring as such activities might be.

Aronowitz recognizes that labor's revival requires a dramatic breakthrough into the hearts and minds of millions of unorganized workers, people who now see unions as either irrelevant or hostile to their interests. That's the way unions have always grown, in huge organizational and ideological leaps that transform not only the workers but the politics and culture of the entire nation. Indeed, John Sweeney's radicalism consists in precisely this understanding, which is another reason why intellectuals like Aronowitz can now participate in a fruitful dialogue with the leaders of official labor.

To transform the political culture, labor needs its own distinct voice. The unions used to have their own neighborhoods, radio stations, newspapers, and local labor parties. All that has vanished, so despite the thirteen million who still belong to the AFL-CIO, labor is effectively mute when it comes to setting the national political agenda or playing a part in the cultural buzz now refracted through the television talk shows and op-ed pages. The formation of a labor party used to be the left's favorite solution to this problem, but Aronowitz no longer gives priority to such a strategy, in part because of the general decay into which the whole party system has fallen in our atomized, plebiscitarian political universe.

Labor needs not just a voice, but a radical message that makes its own interests synonymous with the public good. Bill Gates and Steve Jobs offer us a world of techno-utopian empowerment, while Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan insist that the United States must once again become a Christian republic. Labor's vision must be just as bold, so a renewal of a mythical, 1950s-style "social compact" simply will not do. Perhaps, therefore, we should revisit *False Promises* after all, not so much for its indictment of the trade-union leadership, but as a way of reestablishing a radical, visionary standard by which to judge the corporations, the economy, and the nation, so that we can inspire the millions necessary to transform them. ●

NELSON LICHTENSTEIN, who teaches history at the University of Virginia, is the author of *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS BY *DISSENT* EDITORS

JOANNE BARKAN, *A Pup in King Arthur's Court*. Lyrick Publishing, 1998.

JOANNE BARKAN, *A Tale of Two Sitters*. Lyrick Publishing, 1998.

DAVID BROMWICH, *Disowned by Memory: Wordsworth's Poetry of the 1790s*. University of Chicago Press, 1998.

CYNTHIA FUCHS EPSTEIN, Carrol Seron, Bonnie Oglensky & Robert Sauté, *The Part-Time Paradox: Time Norms, Professional Life, Family and Gender*. Routledge, 1998.

TODD GITLIN, *Sacrifice*. Metropolitan, 1999.

ERAZIM KOHAK, *Zelena Svatozar: Kapitoly z ekologicke etiky (The Green Halo: Bird's Eye View of Ecological Ethics)*. Prague: Sociological Publishers, 1998.

JO-ANN MORT, ed., *Not Your Father's Union Movement: Inside the AFL-CIO*. Verso, 1998.

BRIAN MORTON, *Starting Out in the Evening*. Crown, 1998.

GEORGE PACKER, *Central Square*. Graywolf Press, 1998.

ANSON RABINBACH, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals Between Apocalypse and Enlightenment*. University of California Press, 1998.

ANN SNITOW & Rachel Blau DuPlessis, eds. *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices From Women's Liberation*. Three Rivers Press, 1998.

DENNIS WRONG, *The Modern Condition: Essays at Century's End*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

DENNIS WRONG, *The Oversocialized Conception of Man and Other Essays*, Transaction Publishers, 1999.

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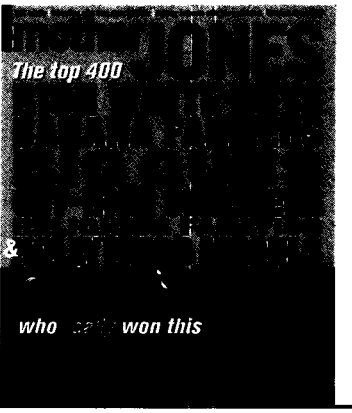

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More Teen Feminists

Editors:

You don't have to go to Duluth or Boston to get a noncommercial magazine with a feminist editorial slant (see "Beyond Buying and Posing: Teen Feminist Magazines," *Dissent*, Fall 1998). You can get one right here in New York—with the added bonus that it's well written, and teens read it with enthusiasm.

KEITH HEFNER
New York, N.Y.

Maxine Phillips Replies:

Keith Hefner publishes a very good magazine/newspaper for New York teens—*New Youth Connections*, but I focused on national magazines aimed at girls. Subscriptions to *NYC* cost $10 per year for seven issues. Call 212-242-3270, ext. 123.

Off the Mark on Marx

Editors,

I am disappointed that distinguished historian Gerda Lerner, in "The Meaning of Seneca Falls" (*Dissent*, Fall 1998), felt it necessary to misrepresent the historical project of the left in her effort to preserve the lessons of the 1848 Seneca Falls Women's Rights convention. Noting that Seneca Falls and the *Communist Manifesto* arrived on the historical scene in the same year, Lerner contrasts the subsequent accomplishments of nonviolent, legalistic, and gradualist feminism with the empty failures of violent, state-terrorist, and revolution-obsessed "communism." The problem is that Lerner has constructed a straw dog that owes more to the outdated mindset of the cold war than it does to feminist analysis.

Lerner's failed "communism" refers in fact to the doomed antidemocratic projects of Stalinism and Maoism, neither of which was remotely capable of embodying nineteenth-century European radicals' vision of the good society. For *Manifesto* authors Marx and Engels, desirable social transformation on the model of a classless and post-economic society (the real specter of "communism") was possible only in countries with highly developed forces of production and needed to emerge in a number of the most industrialized advanced states at the same time. Marx envisaged the classless society as necessarily and desirably a stateless society and entertained the possibility of gradual, nonviolent transition to socialism despite his painful knowledge that ruling classes regularly used brutal repression to keep working men and women in their place. And Marx's specter, properly understood for what it was and is, contributed and contributes significantly to improved working-class living standards and democratic rights throughout the world, largely through peaceful means.

Both sides of the cold war found it useful to claim that the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China embodied 1848's "specter of Communism." Why Professor Lerner feels compelled to repeat that misrepresentation is something of a mystery.

PAUL STREET
DeKalb, IL

Gerda Lerner Replies:

My main purpose in framing my article on Seneca Falls within this comparative form was to counteract a tendency which pervades historical scholarship and media writing, namely, to minimize the importance of feminism as a movement for social change. While the importance of Marxism in both theory and practice has been widely acknowledged, both by its supporters and by its enemies, feminism, the movement for justice for half the human race, has consistently been treated as minor, a "special interest." I was therefore not concerned in my article in entering a debate on Marx' and Engles' intentions and purposes in writing the *Communist Manifesto* nor did I wish to go into a discussion of the various schools of Marxism and their validity. I simply stated historical facts as to the outcome of the movement launched by the *Communist Manifesto*, which, I believe, was fairly characterized as having caused "revolutions, wars, tyrannies, and counterrevolutions." In a lengthier discussion of the subject of Marxism as a social movement I might have added, that it also caused reformist movements for social change and social democracy. In that sense, I stand corrected.

I do not agree that it is cold war logic to regard the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China as having followed Marxist doctrine.

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I AM AN immigrant to *Dissent*-land from the shores of the New Left. Although I've had my naturalization papers since 1986, my nontraditional background got me this Last Page assignment. For the magazine's forty-fifth anniversary, the editors asked me to describe how *Dissent* looked when I first stepped off the boat. And how does it look now to someone of my extraction?

My extraction: After generic antiwar and student protests, I spent the 1970s looking, mostly in Italy, for the Third Way—an alternative to both Leninism and social democracy that would be revolutionary, democratic, and socialist. Then I discovered the New American Movement (NAM), whose members were reading Gramsci and digging in for a long war of position. NAMers wouldn't touch social democracy. Equally attractive, the organization embraced feminism and enforced a 50-percent-women rule for leadership and all committees. What more could anyone ask?

Dissent wasn't even a blip on the radar screen until after NAM and Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee merged to form the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), in 1982. I, like most NAMers, saw *Dissent* politically as the extension of DSA's "right-wing social democratic" faction. Irving Howe—DSA vice chair and *Dissent* editor—was the concept made flesh.

NAMers suspected *Dissent* of the same failings as Harrington's group: too wedded to the Democratic Party, too soft on U.S. imperialism, too obsessed with old battles against Stalinism, inadequately sensitive to the sufferings of Palestinians, indifferent to environmental issues, out to lunch on feminism, and "bad on Vietnam." This didn't inspire many of us to read *Dissent*. Yet one NAMer—an older ex-Communist—went through stacks of the magazine during the merger negotiations. I remember his reaction: "Their thing is democracy." But wasn't democracy our thing, too?

In 1983, I heard that some *Dissent*ers wanted to run an article (presumably semipositive) on the Italian Communist Party, but anticommunist Howe still balked. This made no sense in my political language. I had been writing critically about the Italian Communists for years. Sure, I condemned their unwillingness to make a definitive break with the Soviet Union, but their muddled social democratic politics masquerading as the Third Way bothered me more.

By 1984, I had become deeply pessimistic about the democratic socialist project, given capital's power to strike—so pessimistic that I found an unexpected political soul mate on the DSA speaking circuit—Irving Howe. Passion for the socialist ideal, determination to explore every difficulty openly, curiosity about the actual institutions despite the near hopelessness of the project—Howe's politics looked very fine to me. The step from this appreciation to visiting a *Dissent* editorial board meeting in 1985 required no ideological effort.

How did the *Dissent* board look to a person of NAM descent? Pretty old, very male, professionally homogeneous (many academics), and politically heterogeneous (socialists, social democrats, liberals, a few heading farther to the right). The language had a more American ring—less Marxism and fewer European political formulations. I sensed less alienation from American society, less anger. I bumbled around like an outsider. Someone asked how the magazine could increase the number of women writers. "Just set yourself a goal for every issue," I piped up, "for example, one-third women." Howe looked grim. Someone else called out, "Do you mean affirmative action?" I clearly didn't know the native lingo.

And now? We put out a fine left magazine (with more young and women writers), but it has lost much of its idiosyncratic socialist flavor. No surprise. We lost Irving and other socialists of his kind. Communism collapsed; only the shadow of a democratic socialist movement outlived it. Now we ponder the prospects of the welfare state in a globalized economy. Most *Dissent*ers don't miss the socialist ideal; they identify with other left traditions. The NAM immigrant regrets the loss. Socialism has always been the name of my desire.

JOANNE BARKAN

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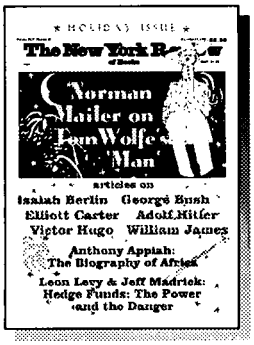
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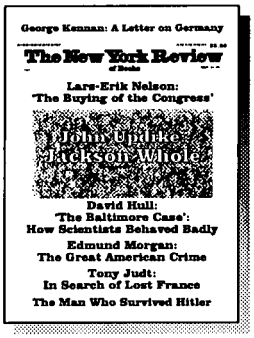

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